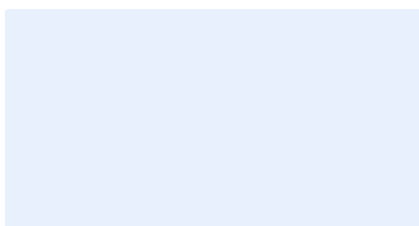


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## **Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties**

### **Annual Progress Report**

#### **Contact details:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme</li></ul>	Name: Carly Heggarty Telephone: Click or tap here to enter text. Email: carly.heggarty@nrc.ac.uk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan</li></ul>	As above <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Name: Click or tap here to enter text. Telephone: Click or tap here to enter text. Email: Click or tap here to enter text.
Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:	Please insert link or details here Click or tap here to enter text.
Signature: C.Heggarty	

**This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.**

**It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.**

**This report reflects progress made between April 2023 and March 2024**

## **PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme**

- 1** In 2023-24, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

*Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.*

During the reporting period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, NRC actively endeavoured to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations among both staff, students, external organisations, and local community. Various initiatives were implemented to enhance awareness and illustrate the college's commitment to these values.

### **AccessAble**

The college continues to have a contract with AccessAble. AccessAble provide accessible information on NRC's facilities which are available for visitors, staff, and students. During 23/24-year 763 people made use of the site for NRC with 2076 views.

Audits are carried out annually by surveyors to ensure changes are made in compliance with legislation and necessity for people with disabilities and the website is updated to reflect any changes.

### **Student Induction**

Student services organised a "Student Services Roadshow" during the induction period. Over two weeks, team members, including the Student Services Manager, Education Support, Careers, Student Finance, Students' Union, and Northern Plus, visited classes across all campuses. The Student Engagement Officer used this time to explain the role of the Students' Union and the responsibilities of Class Representatives. In total, 100 classes were visited across all sites.

The virtual student handbook continued this year, accessible to students via Canvas. The handbook provides essential information about student life, including sections on Equality, Safeguarding, Student Services, Exams, Health and Wellbeing, and Student Feedback.

### **InfoFest**

A successful Fresher's event took place on five campuses over the course of two weeks during the induction period. This comprehensive event aimed to

welcome new students and provide them with essential information and resources to support their academic journey and personal development.

Over 80 external organisations attended the event, offering a diverse range of services related to health and wellbeing, employability, and higher education. These organisations provided students with crucial information about the support available in the local community, helping them to make informed decisions about their health, career prospects, and further education opportunities.

Student Services had a prominent presence at each of these events, showcasing the wide range of internal support available to students. This included information on academic support services, finance which may be available to them and extracurricular activities. The goal was to ensure that students were aware of the comprehensive support network within the college, aimed at enhancing their overall well-being and academic success.

The Fresher's event also featured interactive sessions and workshops, allowing students to engage directly with service providers and learn about various resources in an interactive and supportive environment. These sessions included health and wellness workshops, career planning seminars, and Q&A sessions with university representatives.

### **Students' Union President / Student Governor**

In June 2023, the Students' Union President, and Student Governor for the academic year 2023/24 were elected.

The Student President was highly active, participating in the induction process, Freshers' events, promotional videos, and fundraising activities. He also attended external meetings and engaged with NUS-USI events and meetings, demonstrating his commitment to student advocacy and leadership.

### **Class Representative Elections**

In late September, all academic staff were provided with guidance on conducting elections to select two class representatives and instructions on registering these representatives with the Students' Union. Each year, every class elects one or two students to represent them on the Students' Union, with these elections being facilitated by course lecturers.

This academic year, 243 class representatives were registered by their course coordinators.

Student representative training sessions were conducted on all campuses during mid-October. These sessions were tailored with bespoke training in collaboration with the Northern Regional College Students' Union and NUS-USI, aimed at empowering class representatives to fulfil their roles effectively. During these sessions, class representatives had the opportunity to:

- Form positive relationships with other representatives through team-building exercises.
- Gain insights into the support services offered by the Students' Union and the boundaries of their roles.
- Learn about their responsibilities and duties.
- Receive an overview of NUS-USI and familiarize themselves with student officer positions.

The training sessions comprised of icebreakers, communication-based games, and informative sessions on roles and responsibilities, along with details on communication channels via social media. For those unable to attend in person, an online training module was made available on Canvas, accessible to all class representatives, including those in Higher Education and part-time classes.

Student Officers played a vital role throughout the academic year, with a total of 19 officers holding various positions:

- Mental Health: 7 Officers
- LGBTQIA+: 4 Officers
- Disability: 3 Officers
- Women's: 2 Officers
- Further Education: 1 Officer
- Activities: 1 Officer
- Vice President: 1 Officer

These officers actively engaged in supporting the Students' Union through their involvement in events and activities, including open nights and enrolment days aimed at showcasing the college. They also maintained a strong presence at NUS-USI, participating in campaigns and events specific to Further Education, demonstrating their commitment to student advocacy and representation.

### **FE Campaigns Day**

The FE Campaigns Day aimed to unite like-minded students from Further Education colleges across Northern Ireland, equipping them with the skills and support necessary to initiate and carry out their own campaigns. Eight students from Northern Regional College participated, alongside peers from Belfast Met, SERC, and Southwest College. Throughout the day, students honed their

campaigning skills, explored topics of importance to them, and gained practical insights into implementing campaigns on their campuses. The event also provided an invaluable networking opportunity for students to connect with peers from different institutions.

### **Conference**

The NUS-USI conference, held over two days at the Ormeau Baths in Belfast, offered an exciting platform for students to collaborate on high-impact campaigns that drive tangible change. Attendees had the opportunity to shape and prioritise campaigning agendas for the future, engaging in discussions and debates on various policy proposals. Key policy areas included:

1. Childcare Provision across Northern Ireland
2. Political Mobilisation and Democratisation
3. Reform to NUS democracy and organising.

Students from Higher Education, Further Education, and Apprenticeships came together to endorse these motions, underscoring the collective commitment to advancing student interests and effecting positive change.

### **Clubs and Societies**

During this academic year, the students' union successfully established four new clubs and societies at our Coleraine and Newtownabbey campuses. These new clubs have provided students with opportunities to socialise outside of their academic courses, fostering new friendships and connections. The club's created were dungeons and dragons, LGBTQI+, 5 a side football and Badminton.

### **Student Health and wellbeing**

Throughout the duration of the year a number of initiatives were carried out to promote and improve the wellbeing of our students. The use of internal and external stakeholders allowed a wide range of topics to be offered to students to attend. The main initiatives carried out this academic year are as follows;

#### **Cost of living support**

##### **Breakfast Club**

All Further Education Colleges across Northern Ireland received a hardship payment fund from the Department for Economy to support students during the cost of living crisis. Breakfast Club was reintroduced following the success of last years. This initiative ran each morning from 8:30 am to 10:00 am, providing

students with the opportunity to have breakfast before starting their studies for the day.

The breakfast club was well-received, with positive feedback from both staff and students highlighting its impact on student well-being and readiness for the day. This initiative underscored our commitment to supporting students through challenging times, ensuring they have the necessary resources to succeed academically and personally.

### **Winter welfare week**

Last academic year, the college received winter packs, hygiene packs, and an additional batch of hoodies from the department as part of the cost-of-living support initiative. These provisions were aimed at assisting students in managing the financial challenges they faced.

In November 2023, NRC launched Winter Welfare Week across all campuses, offering students access to these essential items and providing comprehensive support. During this week, students could obtain necessary supplies and receive guidance from external agencies such as the Consumer Council, Translink, and Inspire. These organisations were on hand to offer practical advice and support to help students navigate the cost-of-living crisis.

Winter Welfare Week was designed to ensure that no student was left without the necessities needed for their well-being. By collaborating with external agencies, we were able to provide a holistic support system, addressing both immediate material needs and long-term financial strategies. This initiative underscores our commitment to supporting our students through challenging times, ensuring their health, well-being, and academic success.

### **Student welfare and period dignity scheme**

The student welfare boxes and Period Dignity Scheme continued throughout this academic year and were greatly appreciated by the students. The welfare boxes, stocked with essential hygiene and self-care items, played a crucial role in supporting student well-being, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis. Feedback from students highlighted the positive impact these resources had on their daily lives, alleviating some of the financial pressures associated with personal care.

The Period Dignity Scheme, which ensures the availability of free period products, has now been successfully implemented as a mandatory requirement for all educational institutions. This initiative guarantees that students, staff, and visitors have access to free period products in all buildings, promoting inclusivity and gender equity. These products are readily available in all female

and gender-accessible bathrooms, ensuring that no one is left without essential hygiene products.

This initiative not only addresses the practical needs but also tackles the broader issue of period poverty, which affects many. By providing free period products, we are helping to reduce absenteeism and improve the overall educational experience for our students and staff. The widespread availability of these products signifies our commitment to creating a supportive and equitable environment for everyone on campus.

### **Love Week**

To highlight Sexual Health Awareness Week, the student engagement team organised a series of activities aimed at understanding the importance of sexual well-being and the characteristics of a healthy relationship.

The week's activities included:

- **Active Consent Green Flags:** Sessions focused on identifying positive indicators of consent and mutual respect in relationships.
- **The Sexual Health Clinic:** Providing access to sexual health services and information.
- **Workshops on Consent by PSNI:** Educational workshops delivered by the Police Service of Northern Ireland, highlighting the critical aspects of consent and legal perspectives.
- **C-CARD Scheme Promotion:** Promoting the C-CARD scheme, which provides free access to condoms and sexual health advice.
- **Nexus Bystander Workshop:** Training sessions aimed at empowering students to intervene safely and effectively in situations where someone might be at risk.

These activities collectively aimed to educate students on maintaining their sexual health and building respectful, healthy relationships. The initiative not only provided valuable information and resources but also encouraged open dialogue and awareness about sexual health issues on campus.

### **Student money week**

In collaboration with Student Finance, an initiative was launched to celebrate National Student Money Week, focusing on this year's theme, "Less Risk, More Reward – Looking After Your Financial Wellbeing." Our Student Finance Coordinator, led a series of financial well-being talks and conducted funding information sessions for students transitioning into Higher Education.

Additionally, the student engagement team distributed hoodies to support students during the cost of living crisis, providing practical assistance and promoting financial resilience. The initiative aimed to equip students with essential knowledge and resources to manage their finances effectively, emphasising the importance of making informed financial decisions. Through these efforts, we sought to enhance students' financial literacy and well-being, ensuring they are better prepared to handle financial challenges both during their studies and beyond.

### **Digital Accessibility**

We are committed to improving the accessibility and usability of our website to benefit all users. We continue to work closely with our IT department to identify and resolve any accessibility issues outlined through the Web Accessibility Evaluation tool (WAVE) to make the website accessible, in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Our accessibility statement which is available at <https://www.nrc.ac.uk/accessibility> outlines the activities we undertake to increase accessibility as well as our continuing efforts to create an inclusive user experience.

### **Employee Mental Health Charter**

The College have continued to partner with the Chest, Heart and Stroke 'Well Team at Work' initiative by implementing a targeted health and well-being action plan. Various activities, campaigns and awareness raising initiatives have taken place during 23/24 to help improve employee mental health, such as:

#### **Coping with Fatigue and Burnout Session from HSE**

- Inspire Wellbeing Introduction Session
- Mental Health Awareness week – 15<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> May - Signposting and Highlighting Inspire and College Mental Health Champions
- Introduction to meditation session with Bluemind meditation
- Highlighting and encouraging staff to take part in Darkness into Light Walk
- Charity Spinathon fundraising for Aware
- Sound Bath session for Staff and students
- Loneliness Awareness Week – Highlighting the importance of connection
- Thank You Day – Highlighted and Thanked staff for supporting the work of Equality, Health and Wellbeing team
- Armchair Yoga – using gentle movements and stretching with relaxed breathing ending with mindfulness and meditation



- Dementia Awareness support session from Alzheimers society
- Looking after your Mental and Physical health 50+ session from Age NI
- Highlighting World suicide prevention day
- Work Related Stress Event for Line Managers
- Highlighting Stress Awareness Day
- Stress Control Classes from HSCNI
- Self Care Session – Techniques on Reducing Stress from Wellbeing NI
- Movember – highlighting and supporting mens mental health
- World kindness Day – highlighting and reminding staff of dignity at work policies – tying in with anti bullying week
- National Grief Awareness Week – A full week of sessions from Cruse to support staff dealing with grief
- Highlighting Brew Monday instead of Blue Monday
- Aware Mental Health and Life skill sessions – CBT and Mindfulness
- Eating Disorder Awareness Week - Highlighting and Signposting for support
- Women and Mental Health session from Inspire
- Neurodiversity Week – a full week of sessions for staff to avail of

### **Autism Friendly College**

As part of our ongoing commitment to making our campuses inclusive and maintaining our Autism Friendly status. Student Services arranged for Jude Morrow an Autism Advocate to deliver an interactive training workshop in June 2023 – 77 attended including staff, school SENCOs and educational psychologists.

The workshops were organised in response to the growing number of students at the College presenting with autism.

- Continued to offer transition visits to help ease the move from school to college.

Trialled the use of a quiet room on the Newtownabbey campus and discussions were had to roll out a quiet room in the new Causeway Campus

### **Careers Advice and Support**

Throughout the academic year, the Careers Team have engaged in a range of activities including events hosted by DfE, community organisations and local schools.

The Careers Team provided face to face guidance on campus and in outreach centres to help individuals navigate barriers to learning. Practical examples included producing documentation showing qualification equivalents, helping

individuals' complete applications, advocacy, visa and fees information, and organising pre-entry initial English language assessments.

In addition, the Careers Team have collaborated with the Education Support Team to develop an in-house programme supporting Autistic students consider their options and prepare for HE or employment.

### **Northern Plus**

The ongoing success of the pilot service has led to its continuation into the 2023/2024 academic year. This initiative aims to provide timely support for students whose attendance and punctuality fall below acceptable standards. In addition to addressing attendance issues, the service focuses on helping non-achieving students to refocus their efforts. It also plays a crucial role in coordinating various forms of support for students facing challenging non-academic factors that may be affecting their performance. By taking a holistic approach, the service seeks to create a more supportive environment that fosters academic success and overall well-being for all students.

### **Skill Up**

The College continued to deliver the DfE funded Skill-Up programme of primarily online courses. Originally intended as a means for providing NI residents with free upskilling courses during Covid-19, the flexible delivery and ease of access has proven popular particularly with women who may be constrained attending college due to family commitments. The programme officially ended in March 24, but it is expected that a replacement will be announced early in 24/25

### **Labour Market Partnerships**

Work has been ongoing throughout the year with Council Labour Market Partnerships. Funded by the Department for the Communities, each Council has implemented a diverse range of programmes including academies and learning credits aimed at upskilling residents and providing support for employment.

### **Schools and Community Engagement**

The Entitlement Framework programme provides the opportunity for school pupils to participate in vocational subjects they would not have the opportunity to do at school, while also providing pupils with an alternative learning experience within an FE environment. The College has engaged with schools with a curriculum offer from Level 1/2 Occupational Studies to Level 3 A Level, in a range of vocational areas e.g. Beauty, Business, Construction, Engineering

and Psychology. The strong partnership with post-primary schools is very much valued by the college.

We also work within our local communities to provide a range of education. A range of courses were held in Motor Vehicle Maintenance, cooking on a budget and an OCN award in Beauty Therapy with some of these learners moving into further education courses within the college. The Women Returner programme, funded under Step Up, also provided opportunities for women to engage with learning in a community environment.

### **Bring IT On**

As part of the Department for the Economy's 'Bring IT On' initiative, Northern Regional College welcomed pupils from local secondary schools to its Farm Lodge campus in Ballymena for an IT Open Day. Bring IT On was formed to address the skills shortage and employability issues within Northern Ireland's IT sector to ensure that there is a pipeline of skilled talent fit for industry needs. The event included a range of practical workshops led by IT sector experts as well current and former students.

The young people who attended the Bring IT On event unanimously agreed that they are now better informed about the potential career opportunities in IT, with 81% of them saying their perception of the sector is now more positive.

### **Next Generation of Female Stem Professionals**

Northern Regional College hosted an interactive STEM careers event, to embrace, empower and inform young females of the range of STEM related professions, in celebration of International Women's Day.

Year 9 female pupils from local post-primary schools including St Benedict's College and Jordanstown School joined Northern Regional College's students to sample STEM-related subject areas such as Engineering, Applied Science, Animal Management, Computing and Health Science. They participated in various interactive activities from constructing a simple alarm circuit, with home-made pressure plate, to use in a zombie invasion to protect the compound full of survivors to learning more about choking management through using a choking vest at the College's Newtownabbey campus.

### **Annual Rotary Technology Challenge**

Over 70 pupils from 8 local schools took part in Ballymena Rotary Club's annual technology challenge hosted by Northern Regional College. The pupils were all given the same basic equipment to complete the challenge and working in teams of four, they had brainstorm possible solutions before writing up their proposed solution and demonstrating how it worked.

This year's challenge called crossing the river, the students were asked to design a way of carrying a package across a gap which emulated a relieve package being sent across a river.

The young people were all given the same basic equipment to complete the challenge. Working in teams of four, they had to select a project manager and brainstorm possible solutions before writing up their proposed solution and submitting their practical working solution.

### **NRC Partners with WHSCT To Deliver Bespoke Training**

The Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) benefitted from short courses delivered by Northern Regional College. The College partners with a range of businesses across many sectors to offer accredited qualifications which are designed to equip individuals with additional skills and knowledge. The training provided by the College covers many sectors and subject areas including, Health and Social Care, Digital Marketing, Green Technologies, Graduate Programme, Business and Management.

The training, which is supported by the Department for the Economy's Flexible Skills Fund at no cost to the individual, is delivered through blended and online learning.

### **NRC and Vineyard Compassion Help People Get Back OnTrack**

Northern Regional College's Business Engagement Team continues to help local businesses and organisations innovate and grow by offering flexible training options. Earlier this year, the team delivered accredited training programmes, including Basic Food Hygiene, Health & Safety for Construction, Barista training and employability workshops for the Coleraine based charity, Vineyard Compassion.

An event in The Vineyard to mark the successful completion of the training and to celebrate the achievements of the participants was attended by learners, staff, volunteers, and partners.

Vineyard Compassion provides emotional, practical, and financial support to vulnerable people in crises to help them get their lives back on track. As part of its holistic approach to tackling poverty and social deprivation in the Causeway Coasts and Glens area, the charity runs social enterprises and works in tandem with statutory agencies, as well as community and voluntary organisations throughout the Council area.

Funding for the training was secured from the NI Housing Executive's Homelessness Prevention Fund Causeway Coast and Glens Labour Market Partnership.

### **Workplace support – Dying matters.**

Northern Regional College, in partnership with Northern Health and Social Care Trust, is supporting Dying Matters Week (May 8 – May 14, 2023). This builds on last year's successful launch of the Death Positive Library and 'Read Yourself Well' project at the College's Ballymena campus which saw the introduction of reading materials on dying, death and bereavement to allow staff and students to explore the subject from different perspectives.

Dying Matters is a UK wide campaign aimed at creating an open culture in which people feel more comfortable talking about death, dying and grief.

### **Entrepreneurship Project Based Learning Competition**

Budding entrepreneurs from all six FE Colleges in Northern Ireland pitched their business ideas to judging panels at the sector final of the Project Based Learning Competition (PBL). The 2023 Competition, hosted by Northern Regional College's Entrepreneurship Hub, was open to all full-time and part-time students. Each college hosted their own preliminary qualifying round with the top entry in each of the four categories - Entrepreneurial, Sustainability, Innovation and Social Impact.

The competition was to promote the development of critical and creative thinking and problem-solving skills among students.

They had ten minutes to pitch their idea to the judges, clearly identifying how their project met the eligibility criteria for the category: Entrepreneurial – creating value from an idea; Sustainability – positive impact on the environment; Innovation – A new/improved product or service or other innovation; Social Impact – positive impact on social economy/society. Marks are awarded for both the project, as well as communication and presentation skills.

### **Loneliness Training for Staff and Volunteers Working with Older People**

Northern Regional College delivered a series of free training programmes for Loneliness Awareness Week (June 12 -18) for Belfast Health and Social Care staff and volunteers who engage with older people. The training, which was developed by Health and Social Care Curriculum Area Manager at Northern Regional College, was offered to both Trust staff and volunteers in both healthcare and non-healthcare roles during May.

The programmes, which were both timely and well received, were developed in response to requests from the Trust for more training in this specific area.

The College's pilot programmes were designed to help raise awareness about the importance of social connections.

The programmes were delivered through 'blended' learning, giving participants the option of doing the training either face to face in class or online. Face-to-face training was delivered in White City Community Centre, North Queen Street Community Centre, Inverary Community Centre, Avoniel Leisure Centre, and Girdwood Community Hub.

The project was funded by Health and Social Care Trust in partnership with Public Health Agency, Belfast City Council and delivered by Northern Regional College.

### **Working Together to Grow the Economy and Develop Tourism**

As part of its ongoing commitment to grow the economy and develop tourism potential in the Mid and East Antrim Council area, the Council teamed up with Northern Regional College to deliver free tour guiding training. The Mayor of Mid and East Antrim, recently hosted a celebratory event to congratulate the ten local people who are now qualified tour guides, having completed the OCN Level 2 Tour Guiding course.

The newly qualified tour guides are now armed with the confidence, knowledge, and skills to create unique experiences for visitors to help create lasting memories of their visit.

### **New Step-Up Programme**

Starting in September 2023 Step-Up, a new programme offered a wide range of flexible new courses provided by Northern Ireland's six further education colleges. Consisting of three different strands; College Connect, DARE (Disability Access Route to Education and Employment) and WRAP (Women Returners Access Programme) the programme aims to help anyone over the age of 16, anyone with a disability and those returning to work after a career break to re-engage their skills and education to help them access employment. Funding for the programme, was provided by the UK Government under the New Deal for Northern Ireland initiative and aims to increase access and participation of under-represented individuals in skills, education, and employment opportunities.

The **College Connect +** is aimed at younger students and any care leavers between the ages of 16-24 who are not currently in education, employment, or any training. With an individual development plan, together with mentorship and careers advice, College Connect + supports additional transversal skills achievement and leads to qualifications – level is dependent on the learner.

**College Connect 24+** targets those aged 25 and over who are currently not in education, employment, or any training. Individual development plans together with a range of flexible delivery modules and short accredited courses will build additional transversal skills to support learners into further training, education, or employment.

For learners with a disability who are looking to enhance their skills and offer experience to create pathways into Further Education and

employment, **Disability Access Route to Education and Employment** is open to all who have a disability, are aged 16 years or over and are unemployed or economically inactive. Support offered through DARE includes weekly mentorship, goal setting and action planning specific to the individual learner to enhance opportunities to gain qualifications and progress into work or stay in work. Learners will also receive support from expert organisations where appropriate.

**WRAP** programme is aimed at unemployed or economically inactive women who wish to build confidence, refresh skills, gain qualifications and work experience in areas of economic demand. Learners will receive job coaching and mentorship and support will be provided to create progression pathways including further and higher education or employment.

Students who availed of the Step-Up Programme were offered the opportunity to receive funding for travel, childcare and any equipment they might need to complete their course.

### **Partnership with NextGen Skills Academy**

Northern Ireland Screen announced an innovative partnership with NextGen Skills Academy, aimed at bolstering Games, Animation, and Visual Effects expertise in three Northern Ireland Further Education colleges. The two-year pilot programme will facilitate direct industry engagement from a range of international and local creative studios, improving students' employability prospects in the creative industries.

NextGen's programmes are advised and supported by a steering group of employers including Industrial Light & Magic, Creative Assembly, and The Animation Studio.

From September 2023, Belfast Met, Northern Regional College and Southern Regional College offered courses in conjunction with NextGen Skills Academy. Each college delivered a Level 3 vocational course, equivalent to three A Levels, aimed at school leavers who have a passion for games, animation, and visual effects (VFX).

### **Northern Regional College Developing Core Manufacturing Skills in Ballymena**

Northern Regional College continues to play an important collaborative role in developing core manufacturing skills in the Ballymena area. The College has worked closely with local businesses in the Mid and East Antrim Manufacturing Task Force (MTF) to develop a Manufacturing Academy which delivers a bespoke manufacturing training programme to fill skills gaps.

Funded by The Gallaher Trust, and with the support and assistance from the MTF, the Manufacturing Academy was launched in 2021. The third group of 17 participants started a five-week intensive training programme in the College's well-equipped workshops in Ballymena this week.

### **NRC Catering Students Contribute to Bushmills Salmon and Whiskey Festival**

Talented young chefs who honed their professional skills in Northern Regional College's kitchens, contributed to the success of the recent Bushmills Salmon

and Whiskey Festival. The Bushmills Salmon and Whiskey Festival showcases the rich food and drink heritage of the area. An important element of the festival was the series of mouth-watering cookery demonstrations in local restaurants. Northern Regional College has established strong working relationships with many businesses along the North Coast. Several current and former students work in the Tartine Restaurant at The Distillers Arms in Bushmills and, under the watchful eye of award-winning head chef Gary Stewart, they were integral to preparation and presentation of the cookery demonstrations at the restaurant during the festival.

### **Inspiring Talk for Hairdressing and Barbering Students**

Hairdressing students at Northern Regional College heard first-hand what it is like to live with alopecia totalis, a condition which causes total hair loss. Lisa Moore, who works as a Training and Development Co-ordinator with Action Mental Health visited the College's campuses in both Ballymena and Magherafelt and spoke to hairdressing students about her experience of losing all her hair as a young child and how it had impacted on her life.

### **NRC Hosts Higher Level Apprenticeship Event**

As part of NI Apprenticeship Week, Northern Regional College held a careers event to showcase Higher Level Apprenticeship opportunities at the College and local companies. The event in The Braid, Ballymena, which was hosted by Northern Regional College with support from Mid & East Antrim Labour Market, Department for Communities, the Department for the Economy and Bring IT On, generated great interest among school leavers exploring their career options.

Employers from different industry sectors who are currently recruiting Higher Level Apprentices, including Clarke, Blaney, FP McCann, Combined Facilities Management (CFM) Ltd and Translink, were on hand to offer advice and guidance on the different apprenticeship career pathways and opportunities.

### **NRC Achievements**

#### **Recognition For NRC's Capital Investment Programme**

Following on from successes in both the GO Awards and Project Delivery Profession Awards 2023, Northern Regional College's Project Team has been announced as winners of the Project Delivery Awards – Project Team of the Year – 2024 Awards (NICS) for the second consecutive year.

The College has subsequently been shortlisted to represent Northern Ireland in the UK wide awards, endorsing a major vote of confidence in the College's capital investment programme.

#### **Bright Young Stars**



Northern Regional College computing students were among the bright young stars recognised at the Young Enterprise Northern Ireland 2023 glittering awards ceremony. The students' fledgling business, AdjeTech, which produced and sold 3D memorabilia, was presented with a Special Recognition Award in the Start Up category - one of just two awards presented to FE Colleges and universities on the night. The Young Enterprise Awards 2023 celebrates Northern Ireland's top young entrepreneurs taking part in the Young Enterprise Company Programme.

### **NI Traineeship's at Stormont**

Students from Northern Regional College were among the 30 young people from Northern Ireland's Further Education Colleges recognised as the first recipients of a Northern Ireland Traineeship at a ceremony in Stormont. The new NI Traineeships enable school-leavers and adults to gain a qualification equivalent to five GCSEs (Level 2), while also gaining valuable work experience in the sector they are interested in. The students were recognised for exceptional progress, personal achievement, and their commitment to completing the Traineeship.

The five Northern Regional College students who were among the first cohort from Northern Ireland to complete a NI Traineeship.

### **Good For ME Good for FE Awards**

The Student Support Services team at Northern Regional College received national recognition for its outstanding commitment and dedication to supporting students. The team was named "Volunteering Team of the Year" at the Good for ME Good for FE awards for its significant impact on the College community by addressing local needs in an innovative and creative way.

Good for ME Good for FE is a national campaign driving a programme of sustainable community action across the UK. FE Colleges have come together to support the campaign, encouraging staff and students to get involved in a wide range of volunteering and fundraising activities.

The winners of the Good for ME Good for FE awards were announced in a virtual ceremony and the award winners were invited to attend a special celebration event in the House of Lords in December.

### **Entrepreneurial Spirit**

Four of the top awards at the recent Young Enterprise NI Big Market trade event went to business students at the College's Coleraine campus for their environmentally friendly candle sets Eco Wicks.

An important element of the Level 3 Business course is project-based learning, which is designed to give students practical experience of working in a business environment. For their project they came up with the idea of creating candle sets that would allow customers to craft their own candles using personalised containers.

Eco Wicks candle sets sold out at the Young Enterprise NI showcase Big Market event in Newtownabbey, but the fledging company picked up four of the top awards including: Best Start-up Company, in recognition of Eco Wicks exceptional initiative and strategic approach to business; Best Innovative Product, for the ingenuity and sustainability embedded in Eco Wicks and £100 Mystery Shopper prize, reflecting the company's high-quality service and product presentation and outstanding Sales Person award..

As part of the Causeway Coast & Glens Labour Market Partnership, Celebration of Learning, the students' success was recognised at a reception in Lodge Hotel hosted by Deputy Mayor, Councillor Margaret-Anne McKillop. The students pitched their business idea at a 'Dragon's Den' style competition at Invest NI's headquarters and next up for them will be the Young Enterprise NI gala awards evening Belfast City Hall.

### **The Construction Industry Training Board NI**

Students from Northern Regional College took part in The Construction Industry Training Board NI (CITB NI) annual SkillBuild NI Finals 2023 competition at NWRC, Greystone Campus, Limavady. The competition is designed to test skills, technique, ability within tight timeframes, and identifies the top performers in 11 different trade areas within construction apprenticeship programmes from across Northern Ireland. It is a showcase of the wealth of talent, professionalism, and the brightest recruits throughout the industry.

Over 90 finalists within construction programmes from across Northern Ireland competed against each other in the following categories: Brickwork, Cabinet Making, Carpentry, Electrical Installation, Joinery, Painting & Decorating, Plastering Dry Wall Systems, Plastering, Plumbing, Wall & Floor Tiling.

Northern Regional College students won 6 awards.

Supported by the Department for the Economy and local construction companies, the competition provides an opportunity to showcase the high level of skills and the impressive talent within the workforce, as well as raising the status and standards of professional and technical education and training.

### **OCN NI LEARNING ENDEAVOUR AWARDS 2023**

Staff and students at Northern Regional College enjoyed success at the OCN NI Learning Endeavour Awards. Winning awards for FE Learner of the Year as well as highly commended in the same category, with a tutor being highly commended in the Inspiring Tutor of the Year category.

Northern Regional College was shortlisted in four of the eight categories at the OCN NI Learning Endeavour Awards 2023, including Advanced Learning Through Innovation category and Essential Skills Learner of the Year.

## **International Opportunities for Students**

### **Camp America**

Northern Regional College Travel and Tourism student will be jetting off to Boston in America to work at Camp America this summer. Following her dreams to explore the world of travel, enrolled on the Level 2 Diploma in Travel and Tourism at the College's Coleraine campus. It wasn't long after starting the course that she wanted to take her passion for travel one step further and decided to apply for a work placement at Camp America.

Northern Regional College had the pleasure of hosting a WorldSkills International Pressure Test (IPT) for the Robot Systems Integration Skill within the Farmlodge campus, Ballymena. The competition took place in the centre of the campus where visitors and students alike would congregate and observe the competitors at work.

Participating in this competition were two college competitors (and students) representing the UK, as well as visitors representing Romania and Hungary.

This competition lasted for 3 days, where each team had to complete a series of tasks using the FANUC Robots available on campus. These tasks included programming the Robot for a production line where it would test and disassemble parts for the customer, before organising them accordingly.

### **Science Scholarship**

A Northern Regional College Science student is one out of 5 students from UK who has been offered a scholarship to attend this year's International Science School programme in Sydney, Australia. Currently studying Level 3 BTEC in Applied Science at the College's Newtownabbey campus.

The University of Sydney selected the student to participate in the science programme a scholarship at the prestigious Professor Harry Messel International Science School.

### **International Webinars Sharing Global Perspectives on Health and Social Care**

Academics, healthcare practitioners, experts in housing, mental health, and student support from both sides of the Atlantic shared best practice at a free two-day online event. 'Global Perspectives on Health and Social Care, Collaborative Discussions with Europe and the U.S' in November 2023.

The event was organised by Northern Regional College, Northwest Regional College, South West College, University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava in partnership with St Petersburg College, Florida, is open to all health and social care students and practitioners.

The webinar discussions will include two sessions.

- Housing sustainability. Housing can have an impact on health and wellbeing, and this session will focus on sustainable housing challenges, solutions, and opportunities.
- Student support to thrive and survive. Focusing on how Colleges from both sides of the Atlantic support students in their transitions in education e.g. secondary school to further and higher education. Including contributions from both St. Petersburg College and Southern Regional College staff. Both sessions are open to students and members of the public.

### **Global Entrepreneurship Week**

Students from Northern Regional College students were treated to a packed programme of events to celebrate Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) during November 13 – 17. The College is the FE sector Hub for Entrepreneurship in Northern Ireland and the programme included events, both online and face to face, for students.

GEW is an international initiative designed to introduce entrepreneurship to young people. It Continues to grow, going from strength to strength. Since it was established in 2008, upwards of ten million people from 170 countries have taken part in entrepreneurship-related events, activities and competitions during the annual celebration of entrepreneurship.

As FE sector Hub for Entrepreneurship, Northern Regional College is committed to raising standards of enterprise, entrepreneurship, business and leadership. By drawing on best international practice and embedding digital learning in the curriculum, the Entrepreneurship Hub aims to help students and staff develop the necessary skills and knowledge to embrace entrepreneurship and promote economic growth.

### **Global Game Jam**

Students studying Creative Media Practice at Northern Regional College took part at the Global Game Jam (GGJ) the world's largest game creation event, which took place this year between Monday, 22 January – Sunday 28 January. This annual online event gives gamers a unique opportunity to develop innovative ideas and hone their creative skills, contributing to this global spread of game development.

Northern Regional College will be among the tens of thousands of participants at around 800 physical and virtual locations in 100 countries to take part in the Global Game Jam.

Even though the competition itself is of particular interest to Games Development students, this year, all the students in Coleraine studying

Animation, Digital Design and Marketing, and TV & Film got involved, making it a collaborative project for the College's entire creative media section.

### **Annual Equality Update to SMT**

Annually the Equality Manager writes to the Senior Management Team to refresh knowledge and advise of any updates. In September 2022 SMT were presented with the revised scheme and the new Equality Action Plan for 2022-2027. In May 2023 the Equality Manager requested all SMT complete the ECNI training video on equality screening and advised of the two recent ECNI S75 investigation reports into NIO and DfE.

### **Fundraising**

**GO PINK** - The college hosted a 'Go Pink' event in October to coincide with Breast Cancer Awareness Month – encouraging staff and students to wear pink with a series of events across all 6 campuses – Various teams offered a selection of treatments:

- Beauty offered file and polish, hand massage and Gel nails.
- Hair offered GHD Curls, Plaits, Up Style's, and blow dries in the salons.
- Retail Students created goods and a hamper to sell on the day.
- Sales of tea and coffee will be donated to the charity from the canteens.

The college raised £1634.52.

**Cash For Kids** - The college decided to collect toys/ gifts for cash for kids at Christmas. Looking for new and unwrapped gifts suitable for children and young people aged between 0–18. The college also set up a fundraising page for money donations as well as staff and students having a Christmas Jumper Day. Raising £542 in total as well as donating 150 gifts.

**Easter Egg donations for Young Carers** – The college decided to collect Easter Eggs to give to Young Carers in the local area again to coincide with Young Carers Action Day which was just before Easter – the college donated 142 easter eggs.

**Good for ME Good for FE** – The college continues to be part of the Good for ME Good for FE, a national campaign driving a sustainable programme of community action across the UK. Staff and students get involved in a wide range of volunteering and fundraising activities and help to support our local foodbanks by doing a regular collection.

### **Northern Regional College Staff Awards**

A total of 112 nominations were received for the 14 award categories. This year's staff awards were very well supported and highly regarded as staff nominated their colleagues for recognition. With addition of new award categories to include the college values - respect, inclusivity, collaboration, excellence, integrity and ambition.

### **Sector Committee**

The College is a member of the FE Equality Coordinators' Forum which consists of Belfast Metropolitan College, South Eastern Regional College, Southern Regional College, South West College and North West Regional College. This forum meets five times per year to develop and promote a best practice and consistent approach to the implementation of Section 75 within FE in Northern Ireland.

During 23/24 the forum considered gender pay review, black FE leaders' group, learning and development resources, census data and AccessAble renewal.

**Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice.**

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- 2** Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2023-24 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

Please see Appendix A for progress on 5 Year Equality Improvement Plan 2022 - 2027



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- 3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☒ No (go to Q.4)

☐ Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 3a** With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

Not Applicable

- 3b** What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

☐ As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ As a result of changes to access to information and services (*please specify and give details*):

Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ Other (*please specify and give details*):

Click or tap here to enter text.

## **Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures**

### **Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)**

**4** Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

☒ Yes, organisation wide

☐ Yes, some departments/jobs

☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment

☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

**5** Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

☐ Yes, organisation wide

☒ Yes, some departments/jobs

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- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 6 In the 2023-24 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*

- ☐ Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- ☐ Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- ☒ Yes, in some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's corporate plan
- ☐ No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2023-24 report
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Equality is referenced in the College Development Plan and is embedded throughout the College's strategic aims, vision and values. Specific targets in relation to Section 75 are integrated into the annual HR/CPD operational plan.

**Equality action plans/measures**

- 7 Within the 2023-24 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

0

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Actions ongoing:

8

Actions to commence:

1

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

Further embed equality and diversity into the College and Curriculum through awareness raising and promotion. Work has started on an EDI online training course for staff to include inclusive language following feedback from staff. Due to be completed and rolled out to staff from August 2024 – CPD day.

- 8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2023-24 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

n/a

- 9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2023-24 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

☒ Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality

☐ Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way

☐ Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities

☐ Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

**Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)**

- 10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: (*tick one box only*)

☒ All the time

☐ Sometimes

☐ Never

**11** Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2023-24 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

- The College continues to progress the implementation of its Estates Strategy and is working with internal and external stakeholders to achieve this aim. Including survey of staff and students on opinions of existing campus buildings prior to decanting to alternative buildings, in advance of new buildings progressing.
- The College continues to ensure all policies which may have an impact on equality of opportunity are subject to relevant consultation and that consultations are timely, open, inclusive, and meaningful. During 2023-24 there was regular internal consultation with staff and trade unions with regards the review of policies and procedures.
- Curriculum teams have developed and progressed a model of staff/ student Consultative meetings. These meetings offer a platform for the student voice and promote an ethos of mutual respect.
- A consultation guidance document is available to all managers. It aims to provide clear assistance to managers who are consulting on new policies, strategies, plans, or codes of practice.
- Various surveys have taken place with students and staff as detailed in Q.23 of this report.
- The College has a joint Lecturing Support Staff Consultative Forum. These groups are made up of Union and Management representatives and meet regularly throughout the year. Topics consulted upon included academic planner, implementation agreement, OD review, recruitment, new builds, hybrid working, classroom observation, responsibility allowances and estates strategy.
- The College's Student Union continues to develop and is consulted on a regular basis. Campus class rep meetings allows students the opportunity to discuss issues specific to their campus. In 2023-24 class reps were asked to give their feedback on the cost-of-living crisis.
- All staff who leave the College are requested to complete a Staff Exit Questionnaire.
- The College has good engagement with a variety of statutory, private, community and voluntary groups. Examples of groups that the College engage with are, DfE, ECNI, local schools, local councils, businesses/employers, neighbourhood renewal partnerships, community organisations, NHSCT, PSNI, and Autism NI.
- The College's Business Development function and Senior Management Team continue to be members of various external committees including

local council, economic development and funding groups, local business education partnerships, health trust groups, workforce development forum and various business and community networks and forums.

- Overall, the College's approach to consultation and stakeholder engagement is designed to create an environment where all members of the community feel valued and empowered to contribute to the ongoing development of the institution.

**12** In the 2023-24 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

☒ Face to face meetings

☒ Focus groups

☐ Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing

☒ Questionnaires

☒ Information by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation

☐ Internet discussions

☐ Telephone consultations

☐ Other *(please specify)*: Click or tap here to enter text.

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

Click or tap here to enter text.

**13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

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☒ No

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

**14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

☐ Yes

☒ No

☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

**Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

Quarterly screening reports are published on our website as can be viewed at <http://www.nrc.ac.uk/nrc/equality/>

**15** Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

6 policies screened during 23–24 reporting period.

X2 New Policies and x1 Revised policy internally

- Fitness to Practice
- External Awards
- Educational trips, Visits and Placements

With an additional 3 policies screened during the reporting period by the FE Sector group

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- Parental leave
- Maternity leave
- FE Sector Voluntary Severance Scheme.

**16** Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2023-24:

0 Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.

0 Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented.

0 Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

**17** Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

All policies screened during 2023-24 were screened out and listed on our website as part of the College's commitment to publish a quarterly screening report. Policies are developed by a policy team and when appropriate feedback is sought internally from other staff and students. Where relevant policies are consulted upon with external stakeholders and the Equality Commission.

**18** Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☐ No concerns were raised

☐ No

☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**



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- 19** Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

- 20** From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No, already taken place
- ☐ No, scheduled to take place at a later date
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details:

An audit of information systems was carried out in year one of the Equality Scheme, however the six NI Colleges, along with DEL and an ECNI representative, carried out a further mapping exercise in 2014/15 which resulted in a guidance circular on Student Data Collection. College monitoring forms and recording systems were updated to reflect the guidance. In 2018-19 staff and students monitoring forms and recording systems were reviewed.

- 21** In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)*

- ☐ Yes

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☐ No

☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2023-24 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

N/A

- 23** Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

- The College integrates the use and reporting of Student Equality Data into the Self Evaluation Review (SER) process, an integral element of the College planning process. To progress further use of student monitoring data for planning purposes various meetings have been held with the College's Management Information System department.
- The promotion of equality is monitored through the College's Self-Evaluation Review (SER) process. Curriculum teams are asked to report on how well the course team promote equality, diversity, and good relations with their learners. Support teams are also required to explain and evaluate how well they promoted equality, diversity, and good relationships with each other, with other staff, with learners and with external stakeholders. These responses are monitored by the Equality Officer on an annual basis.
- As a result of monitoring sickness absence statistics and carrying out the H&WB staff survey the College has developed a Health and Well Being action plan.
- The College carries out annual Induction and Mid/End of year surveys with its students. These surveys capture information about learning support, access to information, policies, student services, respect in the College, quality of teaching, facilities, accessibility and much more.
- A total of 660 students from Northern Regional College completed 'The Big Student' survey, providing valuable insights into the specific issues our students face. The key findings from the survey highlight the following concerns:
  - Three-quarters of students worry about their finances, with 15% expressing constant concern.

- A quarter of students have skipped meals, and nearly half have declined social plans due to financial constraints.
- One-fifth of students report that their mental health has deteriorated over the past 12 months.
- Three-fifths of students feel that the cost of living negatively impacts their overall well-being.
- Feedback from the Info Fest was Feedback from students and participants was overwhelmingly positive. Students appreciated the opportunity to connect with a wide range of services and support systems in one place. Many reported feelings more confident and prepared to navigate their college experience and future career paths.
- The new clubs/societies provided students with opportunities to socialise outside of their academic courses, fostering new friendships and connections. The introduction of these clubs has significantly enhanced the campus community, offering a variety of activities and interests that cater to a diverse student body. Students have reported increased satisfaction with their college experience, highlighting the importance of extracurricular engagement in personal and academic development. The successful setup of these clubs and societies stands as a testament to the students' union's commitment to enriching campus life and supporting student well-being.
- Various evaluation data has also been gathered during 2023-24 such as training exit interviews, careers guidance feedback, workshop feedback, staff development surveys, graduation surveys, employer open days, digital insights survey, business development feedback, class rep feedback and staff meetings with students.
- The College regularly reviews its complaints procedure to ensure it is user friendly. This procedure is for anyone who is unhappy about the service, or facilities provided by the College. This could be a learner/trainee or potential learner/trainee, service provider, supplier, employer, member of the public or other external stakeholders.
- The College continues to implement its customer comments/ suggestions/ questions form to allow us to make improvements and therefore reduce complaints. This form has also been made available electronically on the staff and student intranets.
- The College continuously monitors the uptake of all its courses and monitors retention, achievement, and success of all students.
- Student and Staff monitoring data is reported on yearly. The information is then analysed for screening policies.
- Staff exit questionnaires are monitored. These include an assessment of equality and leaver's experiences and seek to establish the reasons why staff have decided to leave.
- Applicants for jobs continue to be monitored and reported on through completion of annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return.
- Grievance and harassment complaints made by staff are processed through the appropriate policy and monitoring data collected.
- Monitoring of any complaints received through the Section 75 non-compliance policy.

### Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2023-24, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

The College's Equality Unit plays a vital role in fostering an inclusive and respectful environment that values diversity. To support this mission, specialised training programs have been created to outline the College's legal obligations regarding equality and diversity, as well as their practical implications. This training equips staff with essential knowledge and skills, enabling them to collaborate effectively with colleagues and serve all individuals seeking the College's services. By prioritising education on these important topics, the College aims to create a more equitable and harmonious atmosphere for everyone involved.

Staff training included:

- Domestic Abuse training from Onus – 13 members of staff completed the stage 2 training delivered by ONUS resulting in NRC gaining Silver status accreditation for a Safe place to work with 13 trusted colleagues.
- LGBTQI – a small number of staff attended an online session delivered by Rainbow on Trans and Non-Binary to broaden and update staff's knowledge on this subject.
- Staff training – Equality and Diversity – Online course by Legal Island – was offered to all staff to complete to refresh their skills.
- Neurodiversity Week – We ran 24 sessions during Neurodiversity week for staff to avail of and was well received by both academic and support staff.
- Student services staff attended the following courses / training during 23-24 - Classroom Culture, ETACC & CCET as well as Understanding self-harm and impacts of alcohol, SENCO briefing, Therapeutic support for Neurodiverse learners, Neurodiversity and Anxiety: exam preparation, AI for accessibility, behaviour management, community and voluntary support service promotional event, Young people nurturing our mental health in a digital age, Epilepsy online.

- 25** Please provide **any examples** of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

The Equality Manager takes part in a broad range of events organised by the Equality Commission, Labour Relations Agency, Section 75 groups, or organisations working on their behalf. Some of the events/training attended during 2023-24 were:

- Dementia Awareness
- Fatigue and Burnout
- Inclusive employment training
- Various sessions with the Equality commission (Intro to Equality, Harassment and bullying in the workplace, Managing sexual harassment in the workplace, fair employment monitoring)
- Dealing with bullying workshop
- Disability employability
- Safeguarding training with Volunteer Now
- Women at work conference
- Managing work related stress for line managers
- Trans and Non-Binary training from Rainbow
- The wellness toolbox with Action Mental Health

A new staff induction handbook and materials were created by the college Learning and Development department to ensure all staff have a positive and extensive induction and start to college life.

Maximising student achievement using Northern Plus and GL pass – was delivered to all academic staff as part of CPD Day in August 2023 as well as Practical strategies for raising confidence in literacy and numeracy and PBL in practice and linking with employers to support PBL projects within your vocational area.

### **Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)**

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2023-24, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

#### **Education Support**

The Education Support Team continues to support and monitor students with learning needs and disabilities to ensure that students are enabled to participate as fully as possible in the academic and social life of the College. Students have opportunities to advise the College of their support needs at pre-enrolment, enrolment and at any stage throughout their course, through self or tutor referral. There is an Education Support Coordinator available on each campus and information is available on our Virtual Learning Environment (Canvas) and the college website.

During this period 744 students were supported by the Education Support Department. 107 of these were referred to an educational psychologist for assessment.

The following is a breakdown of the student's main disability/need:

- 40% learning difficulty (dyslexia/dyscalculia/dyspraxia/MLD, GLD)
- 29% Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- 11% mental health conditions
- 7% medical conditions
- 6% ADHD /ADD
- 2% sensory impairments
- 5% mobility problems/physical conditions
- 1% Other

These students received extra support either on a one-to-one basis, as part of a small group or classroom support or with a variety of adjustments in the classroom.

24 students obtained Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).

### **Learning Support Equipment**

Support is tailored to each individual student and can include 1:1 support with a Specialist Support Tutor, classroom support, assistive technology, and exam support. Education Support Coordinators create a tailored Support Plan that is shared with curriculum and support staff to implement support strategies that best meet students' needs.

The Education Support Team work closely with the Curriculum and Exams team to identify and put in place Exam Access Arrangements for example, extra time, separate rooms, rest breaks, use of laptops, coloured, use of scribes, readers, and prompters, enlarged papers and electronic papers.

### **Examination Support**

The College has provided examination support to 436 students during 2023-24. This support includes extra time, separate rooms, rest breaks, use of laptops, coloured overlay/glasses, word processing facility, use of scribes, readers, and prompters, enlarged papers and electronic papers.

### **Reasonable adjustments for staff**

The College continues to monitor and implement reasonable adjustments for staff, requirements for these are highlighted through recruitment/induction processes, Occupational health or welfare meetings. Examples of adjustments made in 2023-24 were phased return to work after absence, specialist IT equipment, restricted/lighter duties, equipment for help with menopause and limited travel.

### Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

- 27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2023-24?

Insert number here: 0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

N/A

### Section 3: Looking Forward

- 28** Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

The Equality Scheme will be reviewed again in 2027, following the last review on 2022.

- 29** Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

- Roll out of Equality Improvement Plan 2022-2027
- Disability Confident Employer Level 2
- Disability and SENDO Awareness Training for staff
- Dignity at Work Training for staff
- NRC own online training session for EDI – Including inclusive language.
- Disability training sessions from AccessAble
- LBGTQI+ Training

- 30** In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

☒ Employment

☒ Goods, facilities and services

☒ Legislative changes

☒ Organisational changes/ new functions

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☐ Nothing specific, more of the same

☐ Other (please state):

Click or tap here to enter text.



**APPENDIX A****5 Year Equality Improvement Plan 2022 - 2027**

The Equality Commission recommended that the college take a systematic approach to examining our functions and how these relate to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. As a result of this process the College has drawn up this Equality Improvement Plan which identifies a range of actions/ action measures which will enable the college to address inequalities identified through internal and external research. The College will monitor progress on the delivery of this Equality Improvement Plan in conjunction with our Equality Scheme.

Action	Timescale	Responsible person/ Department	Outcome/ Measure	Equality Category	Progress as at March 2024
Monitor, review and utilise annual workforce and student data to inform policy development and marketing.	Annually by June	Head of HR and OD Head of Head of Performance and Planning	Improve identification of underrepresented groups.  FEMR Article 55 CDR Return Learner Surveys Screening of policies	All	This plan was presented to the Colleges Senior Management Team in September 2022. Roll out will commence and be reported on in 2023/24.
Further embed equality and diversity into the College and Curriculum through awareness raising and promotion.	Ongoing	Head of HR and OD Head of Teaching and Learning Excellence Head of Student Experience	Clear objectives and targets within curriculum QIPs.  Self-Evaluation Reviews Exit Surveys Compliments & Complaints Student Surveys/ Focus groups Quality Improvement Plans	All	Following reports from staff that they would benefit from more in-depth equality training to include inclusive language – NRC to create and

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					develop Equality, Inclusion and Diversity online training for staff
Recruit a Diverse student population.	Ongoing	Curriculum Heads of Department Head of Marketing and Communication Head of Student Experience Head of HR and OD	Have a diverse student population, impacting positively on everyone's learning and development.  Social Inclusion Programmes (College Connect) Training for Success/Traineeship/Apprenticeship NI/ High Level Apprenticeship WAPP WSTEM	All	Continuing to work in this area
Further develop student support mechanisms to reduce barriers to education and learning.	Ongoing	Head of Student Experience Head of HR and OD	Increase access to education and learning whilst promoting an environment which accepts and understands diversity. Education Support Northern Plus LGBTQIA+ Support Mental Health support Student Union Officers Digital Accessibility Carers support Student Finance	All	Create in house EDI training for staff to allow them to cope better with issues that may arise in the classroom – Due in August 24

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Monitor, Review and Update of Disability Action Plan.	Annually	Head of HR and OD Head of Student Experience	Improve college services, facilities, and buildings for disabled people.  Autism Friendly College Accessibility Audit Disability Confident Employer JAM Mental Health Charter Health & Wellbeing programmes Student involvement in internal Working Groups/Committees AccessAble Guides	All	Work ongoing
Provide a range of Equality and Diversity training to all staff and students.	Ongoing	Head of HR and OD Head of Student Experience	Increase awareness of Equality and Diversity and compliance with policies.  Induction for staff and students Tutorial programme Staff modules on - Disability Awareness/ SENDO Equality & Diversity Dignity at Work	All	Ensure EDI is part of training for staff and potential to make it mandatory every couple of years
Grow and enhance relations with local community groups	Annually	Head of Marketing and Communication Head of Student Experience Head of HR and OD	Increase and build upon community partnerships.  Community Education Schools Partnerships Good for Me Good for FE project Black FE Leadership LGBT Groups Disability Groups	All	Work ongoing and communication and links made

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			Carers Groups Volunteering Student Union		
Monitor, Evaluate and Review Equality Improvement Plan	Annually	Head of HR and OD	Update and review of action plan as necessary.  Annual Progress Report Equality Action Plan Disability Action plan	All	Work ongoing

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**APPENDIX B**

**PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans**  
**Disability Action Plan 2019 - 2024 as at March 2023**

**1. Public Life Measures**

<b>ACTION MEASURES</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Performance indicators / intended outcome</b>	<b>Progress as at March 2024</b>
The Colleges will endeavour to influence the Department for the Economy to ensure participation of disabled people on the Governing Body of the Colleges.	When vacancies exist and on an on-going basis.	Governing Body will include members with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty with achievement of this measure due to appointments being made externally.</li> <li>• Sector Equality group have written to Department for Economy.</li> </ul>
Continue to encourage the participation of disabled people on committees, student representatives on the Governing Body and groups across the Colleges.	Reviewed annually Year 1 – Year 5.	Membership of committees / groups to demonstrate participation of those with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been an increase of Level 1 students represented on the Students' Union.</li> <li>• Students' Union Disability Officers elected annually across College campus sites.</li> <li>• Efforts have been made to establish a student disability forum however there was no uptake.</li> </ul>
Encourage students with a disability to participate more fully in College life.	Annually as part of induction and ongoing throughout the year. Year 1 – Year 5.	Increased participation in student focus groups, student surveys, Students' Union Membership, and where applicable non-curricular activities such as student's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various student focus groups have taken place over the year. Students with disabilities are encouraged to attend these.</li> </ul>

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		union and sporting activities etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students with disabilities have been elected to Students' Union.</li> <li>• Equality Manager meets with Students' Union to help ensure any activities planned are accessible to all.</li> <li>• Student Services provide differentiated information across the College ensuring accessibility.</li> <li>• To ease transition to College our Education Support staff have arranged events for school SENCOs. Students are also offered transition visits and orientation videos have been produced.</li> <li>• Student Induction pack and videos and all information is made available to them digitally.</li> </ul>
Increase awareness of specific barriers faced by people with a disability including through linking in with National Awareness days or weeks.	Ongoing.	Increased awareness and understanding of barriers faced by people with a disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have participated in various awareness raising campaigns throughout the year including Autism Awareness Day, Down Syndrome Socks Day, World Mental Health Day, Cancer Awareness, Deaf Awareness</li> </ul>

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			<p>Week and HIV awareness day. Neurodiversity Week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We highlighted Learning Disabilities Week to staff and provided short training videos on each difficulty.</li><li>• We highlighted and ran a full week of sessions for Neurodiversity Awareness week.</li><li>• The College continues to be an active member of the Northern Adult Autism Advice Service where multidisciplinary advice is offered to those either seeking employment or attending a course at the College.</li><li>• Head of Student Services is a member of the NHSCT Autism Forum which navigates the Trusts activities to those on the Autistic Spectrum.</li><li>• College has achieved Autism NI's Autism Impact Award.</li><li>• Education support department delivered ASD awareness workshops to 230 students.</li></ul>
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Promote the use of AccessAble website to encourage participation of prospective students.	Annually and on-going Year 1 – Year 5.	Benchmark usage of AccessAble webpage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The guides are promoted to both staff and students via a link to the AccessAble website on the front page of College's website.</li> <li>Literature has been placed at campus receptions.</li> <li>AccessAble were invited to meet with key College staff to discuss further promotion of the guides.</li> <li>A College student has become Northern Ireland's AccessAble champion, a social media campaign has been produced to promote this.</li> </ul>
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## 1.2 Positive Attitudes

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Progress as at March 2023
Create an open an inclusive workplace culture which	Ongoing	Positive engagement, increased provision of information and monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The College have trained a cohort of staff in Mental Health</li> </ul>



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displays respect for those with mental ill health.			<p>First Aid to support both staff and students in crisis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have developed 'Mindful Manager' and 'Mindful Colleague' training designed to practically support staff in positive mental wellbeing.</li> <li>• A number of staff have attended Suicide Awareness/ASSIST training.</li> <li>• The College has committed to the promotion of mental wellbeing by signing the ECNI Mental Health Charter.</li> <li>• The College is registered as a Safe Place for those experiencing domestic abuse and the trauma that follows. We gained silver accreditation this year.</li> <li>• Safeguarding staff have completed Drug and Alcohol Responders training.</li> <li>• allowing for brief intervention with those struggling with addiction and the negative impact on their wellbeing.</li> <li>• Annually staff are asked to complete the Zero suicide alliance online training.</li> <li>• A Health and Wellbeing programme for staff continues annually.</li> </ul>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The college also highlight and signpost agencies regularly that can help with Mental health – Inspire, Aware, Northern Health and Social Care Trust.</li> <li>• Suicide Awareness Day, Mental Health Awareness Day, and Time to Talk Day Mental Health awareness days, advised on NRC's support for mental health for both staff and students, Inspire Wellbeing, Mental Health First Aiders and Pastoral Care and external support i.e., Samaritans, Lifeline.</li> </ul>
Explore the scope of offering meaningful placements, work shadowing and volunteering for people with a disability.	Ongoing	Develop capacity of people with a disability to find employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have investigated avenues of partnership working with external organisations to provide work shadowing opportunities.</li> <li>• Students with a disability are supported by the Education Support team, curriculum staff and Training Support Officers into meaningful work placements and monitored to ensure safety and positive learning experiences.</li> <li>• Further exploration with the Careers team and Inclusive</li> </ul>

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			Learning team to take place in 2023-24.
Introduce training for front line staff on disability etiquette and relevant legislation dealing with disability and the provision of goods, facilities and services.	Ongoing	Increased use of services and facilities of those people with a disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SENDO and Equality are part of the staff Induction programme.</li> <li>• Various disability related training is delivered to staff throughout the year.</li> <li>• Individual teaching staff are given specific training depending on student needs.</li> <li>• 9 Autism Champions completed Level 2 Understanding Autism.</li> </ul>
Consider development of a (Sectoral) Disability Advisory Group that could involve staff and students.	Three meetings per year	Contribute to the development of communications, consultation, screening of relevant policies, monitoring etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group have considered and will review again in 2023-24.</li> </ul>
Through Widening Access and Participation scheme increase number of students with a disability entering the College	Annually	Raise educational awareness, aspirations and educational attainment amongst the target group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The College continues to support a variety of students, including those with disabilities from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to participate in college life via Higher Education study.</li> <li>• The Gallaher Trust is working in partnership with the College to provide a bursary for a</li> </ul>

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			designated student and this will cover their HE fees.
Monitor and review the progress of the Disability Action Plan.	Annually August Year 1 – Year 5	Provision of update contained within Progress Report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This plan is reviewed on an annual basis in March and amended accordingly.</li> </ul>

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