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# NORTHERN

## Regional College

### Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties

### Annual Progress Report

#### Contact details:

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**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 2024 and March 2025**

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

- 1** In 2024-25, 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<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, 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.

### **New Build**

This year saw the opening of the new Causeway Campus in August 2024.

The new, purpose-built Causeway campus is situated on the current (but extended) site on Union Street, in Coleraine. Entrance to the main building is via Union Street and Anderson Park, with the open airy 'garden room' extending the park space into the building.

The former St Patrick's Church of Ireland Hall is a self-contained performing arts and music centre, named St Patrick's Centre, and is linked to the main building by a path. It is also accessible from Brook Street and Circular Road.

### **Transport Links/Parking**

Translink bus and rail station is located just a 6-minute walk away. Car parking is available at Brook Street with over 200 parking spaces, including additional accessible parking and EV charge points. A drop-off point and accessible parking are situated at the Union Street entrance with further accessible parking and EV charge points behind the building at Brook Street.

### **The Facilities**

The 12,600 m<sup>2</sup> campus provides an exciting and innovative new space for working and learning. We have incorporated industry-leading equipment and facilities to support and enhance curriculum delivery, as well as staff and student experience.

Here is a snapshot of our new facilities:

- Linkage to College via Union Street and Anderson Park
- 17 x Classrooms/IT Suites
- 24 x Workshops/Training Suites
- 7 x Laboratories

- Animal Management Area
- Hair and Beauty Salons (Open to the Public)
- Training Restaurant (Open to the Public as a coffee shop and as a fine dining experience)
- TV Studio and Control Room
- Innovation Zone and Central Hall
- Sports Hall marked out for Basketball, Badminton, 5-aside football, Tennis and Volleyball
- Fitness Suite
- Study Centre
- Canteen
- Staff Workspace
- Staff Social Area
- Bookable Meeting Rooms
- Boardroom, Interview Rooms and Seminar Rooms.

### **St Patrick's Centre**

In our lovingly restored Victorian B2 listed building, St Patrick's Centre, there are:

- Performance Hall with double height ceiling
- Music Rooms and Workshops
- Recording Studio
- Box Office and Dressing Rooms.

### **Image/Video Gallery**

To watch how the new Causeway Campus has transitioned from a building site to a state-of-the art campus visit our [Youtube channel](#) to view previous drone footage

### **Student Services**

The Student Services department has been actively engaged in a variety of initiatives aimed at supporting student wellbeing, fostering inclusivity, and enhancing the overall campus experience. Key activities and programs implemented over the reporting period include:

- **Resilience Workshops:** Delivered a total of 17 "Got Bounce" resilience workshops designed to equip students with essential coping strategies, emotional regulation skills, and techniques to build mental resilience. These workshops have been well-received and are part of our ongoing commitment to student mental health support.
- **Funding and Equipment Support:** Secured funding from the Public Health Agency (PHA) to acquire a Virtual Reality (VR) headset. This equipment is intended to be utilised across various student support and learning programs. The funding was through the "Safe Space, Stronger Minds" programme, which targeted students with anxiety. The funding allowed Student Services to purchase a VR Headset for each campus

and have now put in place a VR Sensory room, alongside a comfortable space and weighted blanket. This initiative helps to improve retention and attendance of students who are experiencing high levels of anxiety, to engage with a range of tools and resources within college, so that they can reengage with class.

- **LGBTQIA+ Society Establishment:** Successfully established an LGBTQIA+ society on the Causeway campus. The society has been actively engaging students through weekly meetings held every Thursday. These sessions have included guest speakers and external organisations, such as the Zachary Geddis Trust, to promote awareness, inclusivity, and support for LGBTQIA+ students.
- **Wellbeing Initiatives:** Organised and hosted the "Take 5 Wellbeing Week" in March, focusing on mental health awareness, stress reduction techniques, and promoting self-care practices among students and staff.
- **Mental Health Campaigns:** Participated in World Mental Health Day activities in October, collaborating with the charity Aware to raise awareness of mental health issues, reduce stigma, and provide resources for those in need.
- **Fresher's Engagement Events:** Coordinated a series of events during the start of the academic year, featuring a diverse range of exhibitors. These events aimed to raise awareness of various issues affecting students, including mental health, sexual health, financial wellbeing, and campus resources, fostering a welcoming and informed campus community.
- **Breakfast Club:** Operated a Breakfast Club from February to April, offering free, nutritious breakfast options to students to support their wellbeing and create opportunities for informal engagement and peer support.
- **Hygiene and Wellbeing Supplies:** Ensured accessibility of essential hygiene products by providing period products in all bathroom facilities across campus, available to both staff and students, to promote menstrual health and remove barriers to participation.
- **ZEST NI Sessions** - Student Services had 6 sessions of training with ZEST NI on ASD and Self-Harm, to promote mental health within our students with ASD and improve awareness of how ASD traits may manifest as self-harm to better equip support and curriculum staff on how to best support our students with ASD who demonstrate these traits.
- **Disabled Student Allowance Sessions** - Education Support provided Disabled Student Allowance information sessions across all campuses for students progressing on to Higher Education; to help support

students with the transition and ensure they can receive support when progressed into an HE courses.

These initiatives reflect the ongoing commitment to creating a supportive, inclusive, and health-conscious campus environment. Future plans include expanding current programs and exploring new opportunities to further enhance student support services.

## **Marketing and Engagement**

### **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.

### **Careers Advice and Support**

Throughout the academic year, the Careers Team have engaged in a range of activities including events hosted by DfE, UCAS, 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.

### **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.

### **Labour Market Partnerships/ Local Economic Partnerships**

Work has been ongoing throughout the year with Council Labour Market Partnerships. Funded by the Department for the Communities and the newly formed DfE-funded Local Economic Partnerships. 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.

### **Jordanstown School Taster Day**

The college was delighted to welcome almost 30 pupils from Jordanstown School to a Taster Day on our Newtownabbey Campus. The majority of the visiting students have learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities, including many who are deaf or visually impaired.

The event provided pupils with the opportunity to engage in a range of interactive taster sessions, including Childcare, Creative Media, Inclusive Learning, Entrepreneurship and Joinery.

Each session was hands-on, engaging, and fully inclusive, offering a snapshot of what life at college could be like. The core aim of the day was to demonstrate the college's inclusive and supportive learning environment and to encourage pupils to consider Further Education as a viable and exciting next step in their educational journey.

### **Step-Up Programme**

Step-Up, 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.

Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund Project [Economy Minister announces £600,000 funding to boost access to apprenticeships | Department for the Economy](#)

### **Project Summary – Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund**

Northern Regional College, in collaboration with Triangle Housing Association and Causeway Chamber, has been successful under the Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund to improve access and participation in apprenticeships for individuals with disabilities in Northern Ireland.

This initiative aims to address systemic and societal barriers—including low employer awareness, lack of flexible pathways, and limited support structures—that hinder disabled individuals from engaging in apprenticeship opportunities.

Causeway Chamber will leverage its employer network to enhance industry involvement throughout the project. Triangle Progression to Employment will deliver Disability Awareness Training to all interested employers and offer supported employment services to those on the pre apprenticeship programme. The college will lead on the project and deliver a tailored pre apprenticeship in



Health & Social Care with wraparound support, including mentoring, accessible training, employer engagement, and awareness campaigns.

Over 18 months, the partnership will implement training, conduct disability inclusion workshops for employers, and track apprenticeship outcomes, aiming for improved participation, retention, and progression.

We propose to engage with 70 employers over the project, offering training to at least 50 organisations. We hope to deliver a pre apprenticeship programme to 50 people with disabilities over the lifetime of the project.

The proposal aligns with the Department for the Economy's objectives on inclusion, workforce development, and social equity, and seeks to demonstrate a scalable model for inclusive apprenticeships that can be adopted regionally.

The first event and project launch will take place on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June in NRC Causeway – this will be reported on next year.

Multiply [Multiply | NRC Northern Regional College](#)

## **Health, Sport & Care**

### **Northern Women's Network**

The Northern Women's Network has been established to support the advancement of gender equality across the college. This cross-college initiative brings together representatives from all departments with the shared goal of creating a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable environment for both staff and students.

The objectives of the group are to:

- Facilitate activities for women to support, celebrate and inspire one another.
- Encourage personal, academic, and professional development among women in the college.
- Promote gender equality and advocate for a positive and inclusive learning/working environment.
- Enable mentorship, networking opportunities, and skill-building initiatives.
- Provide a platform to discuss and address challenges faced by women within the college.
- Monitor the impact of NWN through relevant employment and admission/enrolment data along with subjective feedback.
- Record a central tracker for all related activity for reporting purposes.

### **British Council-Funded Gender Equality Project**

The college has been awarded £25,000 by the British Council to deliver a collaborative **Gender Equality Project** in partnership with **Kumasi Technical University**, Ghana. This international initiative seeks to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, with a particular focus on **Women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths)**. This funding was secured in March 2025.

#### **Initial Phase: Visit to Ghana**

As part of the first phase of the project, a delegation from Northern Regional College will visit Kumasi, Ghana, engaging with staff from Kumasi Technical University to share good practice and explore cultural similarities and differences. This will be reported on in next year's report.

#### **Next Phase: Local Engagement and Collaboration**

The project will expand its reach through a range of impactful local and international activities:

- **STEM Taster and Awareness Days:** Delivered in local (NI) schools to raise aspirations among young women and increase understanding of STEM career pathways.
- **Mentoring Programme:** Establishing mentorship initiative linking female students in Northern Ireland and Ghana with role models in STEM industries and academia.
- **Student Networking Opportunities:** Providing platforms for students to connect, share experiences, and build confidence.
- **International Women's Day Conference:** A high-profile event to be hosted at Northern Regional College, celebrating women's achievements and fostering dialogue on gender equality. Partners from Kumasi Technical University will travel to Northern Ireland to participate and co-deliver sessions.

A Women in STEM subgroup has been established with a focus on curriculum-based activities for existing and potential student.

All these activities will be reported on next year.

### **International Women's Day**

To mark International Women's Day, the college proudly hosted two inspiring and impactful events aimed at empowering young women and promoting gender equality through entrepreneurship, leadership, and education.

#### **1. Ignite Her Success Competition – Celebrating Innovation and Female Leadership**

Held at both our Causeway and Trostan Avenue campuses, the *Ignite Her Success* competition brought together over 60 students from local schools alongside Business Studies students from the College. Participants pitched their business ideas in a high-energy, Dragons' Den-style competition, demonstrating creativity, confidence, and entrepreneurial flair.

The event was further elevated by the presence of Inspirational Women in Business, who joined as guest speakers and judges. These industry leaders shared their personal journeys, offered advice, and championed the importance of female voices in the business world.

This event not only celebrated International Women's Day but also reinforced the College's commitment to nurturing ambition and developing future leaders.

## **2. Education and Awareness Workshop – Newtownabbey Campus**

Simultaneously, at our Newtownabbey campus, a dedicated education and awareness workshop was delivered to 50 students. The session focused on the importance of gender equality, breaking down bias, and the challenges and opportunities faced by women in education and employment.

It is anticipated we will roll such workshops out across other campuses in the new academic year.

## **Science, Inclusion, Hair and Beauty**

### **Supported Learning programmes**

The Science, Inclusion, Hair and Beauty department provides education opportunities to students with both MLD and SLD through our Supported Learning programmes. With 225 Full Time Students across 6 full time programmes on each campus and 163 Part Time Students across 2 part time programmes on each of our campuses.

### **Access Courses**

Our Access courses give adults without level 3 Qualifications the chance to complete a programme that will allow them entry into university. We offer this in both FT and PT modes to allow students the flexibility of attendance that best meets their life commitments. The course promotes inclusivity and equality as many of our students are presenting from socio-economic backgrounds (often as newcomers), where rates of participation in third level education are traditionally relatively low. For the majority of Access students, this course is realistically their only pathway into higher education.

### **Belgium Trip**

22 of our Hair and Beauty students had the opportunity to travel to Belgium as part of a Turing project focussing on Entrepreneurship. The group attending this placement will be made up of individuals identifying as females. In the UK, as in many other countries, there is evidence to suggest that males are more likely to

be entrepreneurs than females. This gender gap in entrepreneurship can be attributed to several factors, including differences in access to finance, networks, and resources, as well as societal and cultural expectations regarding gender roles. Despite these challenges, there has been a growing recognition of the need to support female entrepreneurs and initiatives aimed at closing the gender gap in entrepreneurship. This mobility offered the opportunity to bridge this gap by providing access to valuable resources, networks, mentorships empowering women to peruse entrepreneurial ventures with confidence in the Hairdressing and Beauty industries.

### **World Skills**

Science, Inclusion, hair and beauty have promoted internal World Skills competitions within the College for typically female dominated industries such as Beauty. In addition, we have held a WS horticulture competition for our SEN students with SLD the first year that we have given SEN students this opportunity to compete between themselves.

### **Bursaries**

Widening Access initiatives have provided bursaries for not just students from low-income students but also 2 Care Experienced students and 20 DSA students. 132 school pupils from the post primary secondary education sector have taken part in workshops to encourage progression to Higher Education. We have also provided maths and English software to parents of primary school pupils to support their children in maths and English, the schools targeted are from schools with high levels of free school meals.

### **Multiply Programmes in Hair and Beauty**

Tailored Multiply programmes in Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy aimed at improving adult numeracy and literacy skills for learners from diverse backgrounds and those with low prior achievement to gain essential skills for the workplace. Delivered in college and community centres making them inclusive for adult learners, parents and people with additional needs.

### **Sensory Hair Cutting**

As part of the Hairdressing departments commitment to promoting equality and inclusion Barbers completed a PBL project on making haircuts more comfortable for people with sensory issues - Sensory Hair cutting. Barbering students explored ways of reducing sensory overload in the salon by creating solutions such as salon sensory area, non-electrical barbering clippers to noise and vibrations, dedicated quiet time and a meet the Barber session to meet the Barber and environment prior to service ensuing inclusion and access to personal services for everyone.

## **Reducing Barriers PBL**

As part of the Beauty Therapy's departments commitment to promote equality and inclusion Beauty students completed a PBL project on reducing the barriers faced by Wheelchair users in accessing beauty services. Students created a solution and designed a prototype of their idea of an Accessible Desk. This project won the Regional PBL competition in May.

## **Equality and People and Talent**

### **AccessAble**

Our contract with AccessAble continues. AccessAble provides accessible information on NRC's facilities which are available for visitors, staff and students. During 24/25- year 1528 people made use of the site for NRC with 2527 views. Which is a significant increase on last year's figures with double the amount of people using the site and a 22% increase in 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. This was reflected in our new Causeway Campus with a full audit being completed in Sept 2024 to ensure the new campus guides were updated and added to the website.

### **Policy Review Group**

Following feedback from last year's Progress Report and the low numbers in screening policies the college set up a Policy Review Group consisting of various staff members. The Working Group will support the College in its identification of the policies, procedures and strategies required to support the operational and strategic needs of the College. The Working Group will ensure that the appropriate staff and the necessary processes are in place in the production of policies, procedures and strategies, and that plans are developed to ensure communication to staff and external stakeholders regarding such documents is effective.

### **New Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training for staff**

To embed 1 of our commitments in our Equality Improvement Plan - Action – Further Embed EDI into the college and curriculum through awareness raising and promotion. The Equality manager created and inhouse EDI training for staff alongside the L&D Manager – ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and to refresh their learning. An inclusive language section was included as this had been a concern for some staff. This training was mandatory and 91.3% of staff completed it.

### **Disability confident employer**

The college renewed our status for disability confident employer level 1 and have already started work on working towards level 2.

### **Stoma Friendly Toilets**

Following valuable feedback from a student regarding the need for more inclusive facilities, we have taken proactive steps to become a stoma-friendly college. In response, we collaborated closely with the Facilities Manager to assess and identify suitable locations across campus to install dedicated stoma-friendly toilets. These facilities have been equipped to provide privacy, comfort, and necessary amenities such as handwashing facilities and disposal bins, ensuring that staff and students with stomas have access to discreet and accessible accommodations. This initiative reflects our commitment to creating an inclusive environment that supports the diverse needs of all students, promoting wellbeing, confidence, and equality on campus.

### **Building communities resource centre sessions**

The Equality Manager established new connections with the Building Community Resource Centre (BCRC) in Ballymoney, which developed an EDI workshop for students over 16. Funded by Radius Housing, the cultural awareness program aimed to foster respect and understanding around migration, refugees, and asylum seekers, preparing students for life beyond college. The workshops comprised two sessions:

- **Week 1:** An engaging presentation on migration history (Dr Nic Wright) and a discussion on the six strands of Hate Crime in NI, focusing on respect and impact (Fergal Quinn).
- **Week 2:** Personal stories from migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from five countries, followed by a Human Library where students could ask questions to cultural ambassadors.

Approximately 30 students participated, and the feedback was highly positive, with students appreciating the opportunity to learn about different cultures. The sessions included six cultural ambassadors showcasing their countries through currency, flags, photos, foods, and traditional dress. These interactions promoted understanding, reduced discrimination, and fostered respect, trust, and empathy—crucial qualities for their future. The project also helped the ambassadors become more integrated into their community.

### **Loneliness Session**

We held a loneliness event in November at our Causeway campus for staff and students. The event was organised by Causeway loneliness network and was sponsored by Radius Housing. The event was to raise awareness about

loneliness, to normalise conversations about loneliness and to encourage connections, and to help reduce the stigma associated with feeling lonely.

The guest speakers consisted of Lisa Harris from Causeway coast and glens borough council talking about creating connections. Student perspective on Loneliness from Aiden Hoey (NRC Student President) Chris Quinn from NI commissioner for children and young people, CAN compass Advocacy Network, Michelle Ryan-Doherty from NSPCC gave tools and resilience methods to cope with loneliness. Karen McCambridge (NRC) talked about loneliness perspectives and training. Amy Adams from the Zachary Geddis Trust gave a young LGBT persons perspective followed by connect with Take 5 from Lindsay Shaw (NHSCT) and Fiona McDowell (NRC) gave an update on the support services available for students. The event concluded by Leah Glass (NHSCT) who summarised, and the event ended with networking, information sharing and lunch.

This event was well received and well attended by both staff and students.

### **Women in Business Corporate Membership**

NRC signed up to the corporate membership with Women in Business in March 2025. We hosted a launch party event in our new Causeway Campus to coincide with International Women's Day hosting an afternoon tea followed by a panel discussion made up of staff members and Governor's. This membership is designed to support staff's professional growth and development while fostering a more inclusive and empowering workplace. Allowing staff to avail of training sessions, networking opportunities, networking events and personal development webinars.

This membership is part of the college commitment to staff development, providing resources that promote personal and professional growth.

### **Fundraising**

This year, the college successfully completed its fundraising initiatives and established valuable partnerships with various local charities. In October, to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Day, we organised the 'Shine Bright Glow Yellow' Events for Aware, a week-long series of activities aimed at promoting mental health awareness. The events included a sea dip, hair and beauty treatments available in the college salons, as well as hampers and raffles, actively involving both staff and students with awareness sessions and workshops. Additionally, our hair and beauty team hosted a GO PINK event to raise funds for breast cancer awareness, offering special treatments and raffles to support the cause. The college also conducted a toy appeal and raised funds for Cash for Kids, an initiative that consistently receives enthusiastic support

from our college community. These efforts reflect our commitment to giving back to the local community and fostering a culture of charity and awareness.

### **Employee Mental Health Charter**

The College continues to partner with various external agencies to bring staff health and wellbeing initiatives. Bringing various activities, campaigns and awareness for this reporting year to help improve employee mental health.

- Launched our new Health and Wellbeing Newsletter and Calendar for staff – This was created in house by our application and web developer and Equality and Wellbeing Manager – creating a newsletter that was uplifting, colourful and cheerful instead of the usual email structure. The feedback was very positive, and staff seemed to like the look and feel of the new newsletter.
- Well Checks – Chest, Heart and Stroke provided well checks for staff at the beginning of term – these were sold out across all campuses
- 'Footy Fridays' – Launched in Causeway on Friday afternoons for staff
- Aware sea splash and fundraising across all campuses as well as a full week of sessions to highlight mental health awareness
- Talk Money Week – a full week of sessions to provide financial advice and help improve financial wellbeing
- Stress Control classes- highlighted across the year
- Introduction to Neurodiversity session
- Building resilience and confidence session
- Tai chi introduction session
- Self-Care for your mental wellbeing
- Walk and Talk's across all campuses
- Time to Talk Day where a place holder was put in all staff's diary to ensure they took time out to have a cuppa and catch up with colleagues
- CPD Day – New this year to add a section on Health and Wellbeing – as mentioned previously – this year's theme was stress – A sessions from HSENI on work related stress, a kinesiology session on how to cope with and prevent stress and coping strategies followed by a breathwork and chair yoga session – all were sold out and feedback was very good from staff
- Neurodiversity Celebration week – a week full of sessions for all staff to attend

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



- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2024-25 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

Please refer to Appendix A at the end of the report for the complete plan. This section highlights the progress achieved this year as well as the areas that require further development.

### **Action 1**

#### **Monitor, review and utilise annual workforce and student data to inform policy development and marketing.**

This is an ongoing piece of work currently our People and Talent team who are collating the Article 55 review. With student feedback and staff feedback from recent surveys carried out by the communications team. These are all a work in progress and will be reported on next year.

### **Action 2**

#### **Further embed equality and diversity into the college and curriculum through awareness raising and promotion.**

Following reports from staff that they would benefit from more in-depth equality training especially including Inclusive Language. The Equality Manager alongside the Learning and Development Manager developed an in-house Equality Diversity and Inclusion Online training for staff.

This was rolled out in August 2024 as mandatory training for all staff to complete for the CPD day. 91.3% staff completed the course.

Building Community Resource Centre – Sessions in Causeway Campus - first of its kind as mentioned in Question 1.

Women in Business Corporate Membership as mentioned in question 1 -we also set up an employee relations group to coincide with the membership and to help shape the female staff within the college.

The setting up of the Northern Women's Network employee engagement group.

### **Action 3**

#### **Recruit a diverse student population**

##### **Student Data Overview 24-25**

Diversity and Inclusion:

An increase in BME student intake (1.3%) and a slight rise in gay/lesbian students (0.1%) suggest a positive trend toward greater diversity and inclusivity within the student body.

The college have relatively stable international student populations from Syria and USA but a slight decline from Poland and Ukraine.

### Age Demographics:

A significant increase in 16–19-year-olds (2.9%) indicates a potential shift toward more younger students with the decline in the 20–30-year olds (3.2%) and 51–60 (0.6%) Stability in the 41–50 age group and a slight increase in those over 60 (0.3%) indicates a small growth in older students.

Overall, the data points toward a growing younger student demographic, increased diversity, and stable or slightly declining international and dependent student groups.

Our Staff Data will be reported on in more detail through the Article 55 review due to be finalised later this year. And will be reported on next year.

### **Action 4**

#### **Further develop student support mechanisms to reduce barriers to education and learning**

We are continually looking at ways to support students through our student services team – As mentioned in section with the new ideas and updated training that staff receive.

### **Action 5**

#### **Monitor, Review and update of Disability Action Plan**

The college has successfully completed its current Disability Action Plan, demonstrating a commitment to improving accessibility and support for students and staff with disabilities. Moving forward, the college will be reviewing the existing plan and developing a new, Disability Action Plan this September, to ensure ongoing progress and to address emerging needs and priorities.

### **Action 6**

#### **Provide a range of Equality and Diversity training to all staff and students**

Following feedback from staff for a more comprehensive equality training, particularly around Inclusive Language, the Equality Manager, in collaboration with the Learning and Development Manager, developed an NRC in-house Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion online training for staff. This training was launched in August 2024 at our CPD Day and is now a mandatory component for all staff.

91.3% of staff completed the course.

Additionally, in the upcoming year, the Equality Manager will work closely with the Student Services team to create an online session specifically tailored for students, aimed at enhancing their understanding of equality and inclusion issues. These initiatives reflect the college's ongoing commitment to fostering an inclusive environment for both staff and students.

## **Action 7**

### **Grow and enhance relations with local community groups**

Our business engagement team are constantly working alongside the local community and have been linking to bring in-person events to the college – for example the Loneliness Event mentioned at the beginning of the report.

Early in the upcoming reporting year, initial links and collaborative efforts have already commenced for the 'Talent Knows No Limits' initiative.

The new Causeway Campus café on the ground floor, is open for the local community to come and enjoy a cuppa at our new building as well as our hair and beauty studio's with discounted rates for staff, students and the local community to use.

## **Action 8**

### **Monitor, Evaluate and Review Equality Improvement Plan**

This is an ongoing piece of work with the Equality Manager ensuring that the actions on the plan are on track.

This year a session will be held at SLT/SMT level about everyone's responsibilities and to reinforce the plan – with the hope that more departments give feedback for next year's progress report. To be reported on next year.

- 3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2024-25 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes

☐ No (go to Q.4)

☐ Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

- The College wanting to invest in our female staff members - by setting up the Northern Women's Network Group
- Investing in the women in business corporate membership
- The new Causeway Campus opened, and this was as a result of our estates strategy - 'to provide accessible accommodation for different abilities, making the estate inclusive for all'

- 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:

- The Northern Women's Network Group provides female staff members with a platform for support, networking, mentorship, and professional development, fostering confidence and leadership skills.
- Investing in women in business corporate membership can offer staff access to valuable resources, training, and networking opportunities, enhancing their career prospects. Which will help retain talent at the college.
- The new Causeway Campus, designed to be accessible for different abilities, ensures that all staff and students can participate fully, promoting a sense of belonging and equality.

**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 2024-25 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes, organisation wide

☐ Yes, some departments/jobs

☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment

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

Please provide any details and examples:

- Job Descriptions mention that employed staff need to comply with and actively promote College Policies and procedures on all aspects of Equality. And that all staff have an obligation to comply with the statutory duties relating to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and will be required to contribute to the implementation of the College's Equality Scheme drawn up in accordance with this legislation.
- Values, Equality and Diversity is also one of the competency-based questions that should be prepared for, at interview stage.
- Promotes equality, values diversity and acts as a role model. Relates well to people from all cultural backgrounds and demonstrates a cultural awareness. Ensures that their teams have Equality and Diversity training support, and they understand the College ethos regarding E&D.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2024-25 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:

NRC piloted a new performance Appraisal form across some departments this year. To include how staff applied/ adhered/ supported the College Values. The college values being Integrity, Excellence, Respect, Collaboration, Inclusivity and Ambition. This was a pilot scheme and is still in discussions with regards further roll out.

- 6 In the 2024-25 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 2024-25 report
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Equality is a fundamental aspect of the College's strategic framework, highlighted in the College Development Plan and incorporated into its core aims, vision, and values. Additionally, specific objectives related to Section 75 are included into the annual People and Talent and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) operational plan, ensuring a focused and consistent approach to promoting equality across all college activities.

Equality is also heavily focused across the Students Services department.

#### **Equality action plans/measures**

- 7 Within the 2024-25 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

4

Actions ongoing:

4

Actions to commence:

0

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

See question 2

- 8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2024-25 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

N/A

- 9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2024-25 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 2024-25 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:



During the 2024-25 reporting period, the College has demonstrated a strong commitment to good practice in consultation, in matters related to promoting equality of opportunity and fostering positive relations.

### ***Staff Student Consultative Meetings (SSCMs)***

The College's Quality Department is responsible for the SSCM process across the College. There are normally 2 SSCMs per year which aim to:

- enable students to give feedback about the course
- enable students to give feedback about the College
- encourage the quick resolution of problems
- give students an opportunity to be involved in improving the course and College

During 2024/25 2 SSCM1 took place between 18 November and 2 December 2024 and looked at:

- Course and College Induction
- Course and College Expectations
- Course Delivery
- Assessment
- Tutorials
- Support
- Overall experience to date
- Health, Safety and Safeguarding
- AOB

During 2024/25 SSCM 2 took place between 3 March and 18 March 2025 and looked at:

- Feedback to Students
- Course Delivery
- Assessment
- Exams
- Employer Engagement, Enrichment and Skills Development
- Careers support
- Overall experience this year
- Health, Safety and Safeguarding

Responses from SSCMs were collated by the Quality Department and reported back to the College via the Quality and Academic Standards Committee. Outcomes are for internal use by the College and are actioned accordingly.

### ***Student Focus Groups***

Student Focus Groups were conducted by the Quality Department in October 2024 to support the evaluations of Step Up and Traineeship provision.

These looked at:

- Reasons for coming to the college/courses applied for
- How students found out about the course they were on
- Did students get told about what they would be doing on the course and how the College could support them?
- The level of the support within the college- course team, college overall
- The course's effect on overall skills
- Course progress, tracking and workload
- Overall experience and enjoyment of course
- Progress after the course- further education, careers
- College safety and safeguarding
- Improvements of course/college

Outcomes were for internal use by the College in association with inspection activity and are being actioned accordingly.

### **Staff Pulse Surveys**

Pulse series of surveys were sent out by Communications to gather feedback from staff which is vital in helping understand the strengths and identify areas for improvement within the college. No feedback from the results as yet as they will also run into the next reporting period.

### **New Causeway Campus**

The new campus induction Staff were advised to be open and honest with any issues they may be having to give feedback. There was also a consultation session held in person once during this reporting period. Chaired by the principle and Chair of Governors asking for feedback from staff.

### **Colleges Estates Strategy**

The ongoing development of the College's Estates Strategy, where internal and external stakeholders are actively engaged. This process included conducting surveys of staff and students to gather opinions on existing campus facilities prior to decanting to alternative buildings, ensuring their voices are heard before progress is made on new developments.

### **Policies**

The College ensures that all policies with potential impacts on equality are subject to timely, open, inclusive, and meaningful consultation. Throughout 2024-25, there was regular engagement with staff and trade unions regarding the review of policies and procedures, fostering transparency and inclusivity.

### **Curriculum Teams**

Curriculum teams have established and advanced a model of staff and student consultative meetings, providing a valuable platform for student voice and promoting mutual respect across the college community. Additionally, a consultation guidance document is available to all managers, offering clear instructions on how to conduct effective consultations when developing new policies, strategies, or plans.

### **JCC Meetings**

The College also maintains a joint Lecturing Support Staff Consultative Forum, comprising Union and Management representatives who meet regularly to discuss topics including the academic planner, implementation agreements, estate developments, hybrid working, and other relevant issues.

### **Students Union**

The Student Union continues to develop and is routinely consulted on matters affecting students. Campus-specific class rep meetings provide students with opportunities to raise issues pertinent to their campus, fostering a participatory culture.

### **Staff Exit Surveys**

All staff leaving the College are asked to complete a Staff Exit Questionnaire, ensuring ongoing feedback on the staff experience. This system is currently being looked at by the Equality Manager and will be reported on next year.

### **Engagement**

The College maintains strong engagement with a diverse range of statutory, private, community, and voluntary organizations, including DfE, ECNI, local schools, councils, businesses, community groups, NHSCT, PSNI, and Autism NI. The College's Business Development and Senior Management Teams participate in various external committees, including local councils, economic development groups, and workforce development forums, which facilitate broad stakeholder engagement.

### **Northern Women's Network**

The Northern Women's Network has been established to support the advancement of gender equality across the college. This cross-college initiative brings together representatives from all departments with the shared goal of creating a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable environment for both staff and students. As mentioned in Question 1.

### **British Council-Funded Gender Equality Project**

The college has been awarded £25,000 by the British Council to deliver a collaborative **Gender Equality Project** in partnership with **Kumasi Technical University**, Ghana. This international initiative seeks to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, with a particular focus on **Women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths)**.

- 12** In the 2024-25 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 2024-25 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Equality Commission screening policies video was added to the Policy procedures information. To ensure everyone knows their responsibilities when screening documents/policies.

- 14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2024-25 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*):

During this reporting period, a total of 25 Policies and Procedures were reviewed, marking a notable increase compared to the previous year. Specifically, 11 policies and 14 procedures were reviewed, with 2 of these procedures being newly developed.

Please refer to the table below for details of the reviewed items.

Reviewed policies, procedures or Strategies	Equality Screened
Acceptable Use Policy	Y
Admissions Policy	Y
APL RPL Exemption and Credit Transfer	Y
Asbestos Management Policy	Y

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Brand and Publication Compliance Protocol	NA
Conflict of Interest Procedure	Y
Examinations Policy	In progress
External Access to DLE Procedure	Y
Fire Evacuation Procedure	Y
Gifts and Hospitality Acceptance and Provision	In progress
Hazardous and Dangerous Substances Policy	Y
IT Change Management Policy and Procedure	In progress
IT Security Policy	Y
Outcomes Management Policy	In progress
Policy for Document Control	In progress
PPE Policy	Y
Procedure for Document Control	In progress
Procedure for Outcomes Management	In progress
Quality Assurance of Internal Assessment and Examinations in FE	Y
Quality Assurance of Internal Assessment and Examinations in HE	Y
Risk Assessment Policy	Y
Risk Assessment Procedure	Y
Student Assessment Appeals Procedure	Y

In addition, the following policies and procedures were developed:

<b>New Policies, Procedures and Strategies</b>	<b>Equality Screened</b>
Work Placement Procedure	In progress
Exam Board Procedure	Yes

**16** Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2024-25:

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

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

0 Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

(Closure of Ballymoney Campus – EIA)

**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 2024 – 25 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)**

**19** Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2024-25 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

PART A

☐ 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 2024-25 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:

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

☐ Yes

☐ 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 2024-25 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 – this changes each year dependant on what the need is for staff – this year the focus was on Mental Health and Financial wellbeing the same as last reporting year.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 2024-25, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

The College's Equality Department 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:

- NRC in house Equality, Diversity and Inclusion online training following feedback from staff that they wanted a more in-depth session on inclusive language
- Internal mentoring sessions for staff by OD team – this has been started as a pilot scheme and feedback from those that signed up found the mentoring scheme beneficial, this is something that we would like to develop further but still in the early stages
- Mental Health First Aider training from ASIST
- Student Services staff attended the following training - Autism and Self Harm from Zest NI, Supporting school based Anxiety, Empowering

Learners: Addressing Dyscalculia & Maths Difficulties in Northern Ireland delivered by Dyscalculia Network/NRC/Multiply, School Avoidance, Neurodiversity workshops.

- Neurodiversity Week saw a series of sessions provided by Lexxic that staff availed of.

- 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 2024-25 were:

- Stress Awareness Session NUIHUS
- CIPD Accredited course for Equality Diversity and Inclusion still in progress for this reporting period
- Understanding Trauma Informed Practice – from Inspire
- How to create a Menopause Friendly Workplace
- Action Mental Health – Mindset Programme
- Job Evaluation training
- Introduction to Mental Health in the workplace
- NI Employment Law – Neurodiversity and the Law from Legal Island
- How to Empower and support your neurodivergent colleagues
- Various sessions with the Equality Commission -Promoting Equality through Flexible working, reasonable adjustments and mental health, Promoting Equality and Diversity in Employment
- Changes for New and Expectant Mothers

All the above training has helped to gain more knowledge and stay up to date and relevant of current trends and themes across the EDI field.

This year at the college CPD day in February we introduced a new section for Wellbeing for staff to avail of with this year's theme was Stress – there were 3 different in person sessions across the day – Work Related Stress – Fatigue and burnout session from the HSENI, a Kinesiology and signs to look for stress and ways to reduce stress, followed by a chair yoga and mindfulness session. All 3 sessions were well received with them all selling out and feedback was very positive.

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

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2024-25, 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 722 students were supported by the Education Support Department. 101 of these were referred to an educational psychologist for assessment.

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

- 46% learning difficulty (dyslexia/dyscalculia/dyspraxia/MLD, GLD)
- 31% Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- 6% mental health conditions
- 6% medical conditions
- 8% ADHD /ADD
- 1% sensory impairments
- 1% 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. 20 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 prompts, enlarged papers and electronic papers.

This year Education Support were successful in gaining funding for a VR headset to implement a VR Sensory Room for students, as well as a bean bag and weighted blanket.

### **Examination Support**

The College has provided examination support to 578 students during 2024-25. 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 2024-25 were phased return to work after absence, specialist IT equipment, ergonomic chairs, restricted/ lighter duties, equipment for help with menopause, limited travel and headsets provided.

### **Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)**

- 27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2024-25?

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 in 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)*

- Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund. The new project in collaboration with Causeway Chamber and Triangle Housing which focuses on ensuring equal access to Apprenticeships for those with disabilities.
- Northern Women's Network staff group - continue to work together to help engage and support female members of staff.

PART A

- Male champions for the college this is something that we have struggled to find after advertising the last couple of months.
- Culture piece with staff
- Work with student services to create a student induction EDI training module.
- Work towards Disability confident employer level 2.
- The opening of the New Ballymena Campus in Sept 2025
- Encourage additional departments within the college to provide their input for the equality report. Gathering comprehensive feedback from all departments will be an ongoing process and it is hoped it will continue to be developed as part of an evolving effort from all.

**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
- ☐ Nothing specific, more of the same
- ☐ Other (please state):

Click or tap here to enter text.

## PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

### 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. See Question 2
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	See Question 2

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 See Question 2
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	See Question 2



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 See Question 2
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	See Question 2
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	All	Work ongoing See Question 2

			Disability Groups 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 See Question 2

## 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 2024

#### 1. Public Life Measures

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Progress as at March 2024
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Various student focus groups have taken place over the year. Students with disabilities</li></ul>

		applicable non-curricular activities such as student's union and sporting activities etc.	<p>are encouraged to attend these.</p> <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	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</li> </ul>

including through linking in with National Awareness days or weeks.			<p>Autism Awareness Day, Down Syndrome Socks Day, World Mental Health Day, Cancer Awareness, Deaf Awareness 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> </ul>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education support department delivered ASD awareness workshops to 230 students.</li> </ul>
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>

## 1.2 Positive Attitudes

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Progress as at March 2023
Create an open an inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those with mental ill health.	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 First Aid to support both staff and students in crisis.</li> <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> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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> <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</li> </ul>



			<p>into meaningful work placements and monitored to ensure safety and positive learning experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further exploration with the Careers team and Inclusive Learning team to take place in 2023-24.</li> </ul>
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	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</li> </ul>

with a disability entering the College			<p>backgrounds to participate in college life via Higher Education study.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Gallaher Trust is working in partnership with the College to provide a bursary for a designated student and this will cover their HE fees.</li> </ul>
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>

