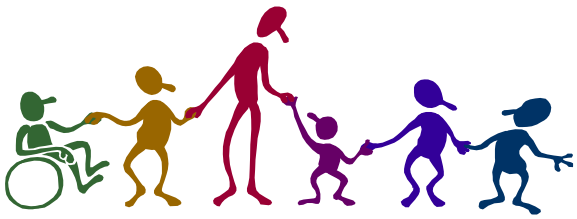
DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1995
[AS AMENDED BY THE
DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION (NI) ORDER 2006]

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

2025 – 2030

NI Further Education Colleges



Alternative Formats

If you require this plan in an alternative format large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language), please contact the named person below with your requirements: -

Name:	**Maureen McKay**
Title:	**Chair of the Equality Coordinator Forum**
College:	**South Eastern Regional College (SERC)**
Address:	**4 Church Road**
	Ballynahinch BT24 8LP
Tel No:	**0345 600 75555**
Email:	**maureenmckay@serc.ac.uk**

Foreword

This Disability Action Plan confirms the NI Further Education Colleges commitment to and proposals for fulfilling the statutory obligations in compliance with Sections 49A and 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 [as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006].

This Act places duties on public authorities, when carrying out their functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability people;
- Encourage participation by people with a disability in public life.

This plan outlines how the Colleges can more effectively mainstream disability issues within policy decision-making. The Colleges have already consulted with a number of key stakeholders at both sector and levels in the development of this plan and look forward to achieving the necessary change for people with disabilities.

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION 5
2 PUBLIC LIFE POSITIONS 7
3. PREVIOUS MEASURES 8
4 CONSULTATION 9
5 TIMESCALES 9
6 MONITORING 9
7 DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2025-2030) 10

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Legislative Duties:

Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), the Colleges as public authorities will, when carrying out its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability; and will
- encourage participation by people with a disability in public life ('the disability duties').

1.2 Disability Action Plan Requirement

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995 (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), the Colleges are also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions. This action plan will also encompass College's efforts in relation to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SENDO).

1.3 Commitments:

1.3.1 Leadership Commitment

The Chairperson of the Governing Body, the Principal and Chief Executive and the Senior Management Teams of the Colleges are committed to the effective implementing of the disability duties and the Colleges Disability Action Plans.

1.3.2 Promotion of Disability Duties

The Colleges are committed to promoting awareness and understanding of the disability duties throughout all areas of College activity.

1.3.3 Resources

The Colleges are committed to allocating the necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) to implement this plan effectively and to develop objectives and targets aligned with the disability duties. Budget allocation will be reviewed and determined annually in line with the Action Plan.

1.3.4 Communication to staff

The Colleges will ensure that this Disability Action Plan is communicated effectively to all to staff through established l communication channels.

1.3.5 Internal Arrangements

The Colleges are committed to ensuring that internal arrangements are in place to ensure that the disability duties and effective implementation of this Disability Action Plan.

1.3.6 Training

The Colleges are committed to providing ongoing training for staff on disability equality legislation and best practices to support the fulfilment of statutory duties.

1.4 Point of Contact

The Chair of the Equality Coordinator Forum will be responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this Disability Action Plan rests with the College representatives on the Northern Ireland Colleges Equality Forum. The designated point of contact for the Forum will be reviewed annually.

1.5 Reporting Arrangements

The Colleges are committed to reviewing and updating annually the implementation of our Disability Action Plan to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

In addition, the Colleges will undertake a comprehensive of the Disability Action Plan every five-years to ensure continued relevance and compliance.
Copies of this plan and the annual progress reports will be made available for all staff and the public to access on each College's website.

1.6 Functions

The Colleges Corporate and Development Plans provide the overarching framework within which the Colleges operate. These plans outline each College's vision, values, and corporate goals, and ensure that strategic decisions are taken in the best interests of staff and students while taking account of the wider operating environment.

1.7 Policies

To support and deliver its functions and services the Colleges operate within policy guidelines established by the Department for Economy, and in accordance with policies agreed through sectoral negotiation or approved by Colleges' own Management and Governance structures.

1.8 The Colleges are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This policy should be interpreted in a manner consistent with the aforementioned legislation.

2 PUBLIC LIFE POSITIONS

2.1 Participation in public life within the Further Education (FE) Sector can be challenging for Colleges, as appointments to Governing Bodies is the responsibility of the Department for Economy responsibility to appoint Governing Body members. Although the College's Governing Body is the only public life

appointment made, the Colleges will encourage the involvement of people with a disability in internal working groups, partnerships and focus groups.

2.2 The Colleges have influences in respect of participation on user forums and partnerships with the voluntary and community sectors, which inform the design and delivery of services and policy development.

2.3 A number of College staff are also members of a wide range of partnerships. They will use their influence to raise issues in relation to the participation of people with a disability where under-representation is apparent.

3. PREVIOUS MEASURES

The Colleges have implemented a range of measures to promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability and to encourage their participation in public life. There are already many examples of good practice in place, including:

- Staff training on disability awareness and equality legislation
- Use of positive imagery in documents and promotional literature to reflect diversity and inclusion
- Engagement with disability representative groups to inform policy and practices.
- Encouraging participation of people with disabilities on committees and groups across the Colleges
- Strengthening partnerships between the Colleges and the disability sector
- Promotion of the AccessAble website to support prospective students and staff improving accessibility information.

4 CONSULTATION

4.1 The Colleges are committed to ensuring meaningful and effective public involvement and participation to inform the development of the Disability Action Plan. The Colleges will continue to engage with a wide range of key stakeholders including people with disabilities on the implementation of the plan.

5 TIMESCALES

5.1 The measures outlined in this Disability Action Plan are allocated across various departments within the Colleges and will be implemented concurrently throughout the duration of the plan. All measures are considered to carry equal importance in achieving the objectives in the plan.

6 MONITORING

6.1 The Colleges will monitor and review outcomes of this Disability Action Plan on an annual basis to ensure progress against objectives and compliance with statutory duties. Findings from the review will inform updates to the plan will be reported to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland as required.

7 DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2025-2030)

A detailed Action Plan is set out below

7.1 Public Life Measures

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome
The Colleges will actively engage with the Department for the Economy to promote and encourage the inclusion of disabled people on the Governing Body of the Colleges.	On an ongoing basis and when vacancies arise.	The Governing Body will include members with disabilities.
Continue to encourage the participation of disabled people on committees, student representatives' roles on the Governing Body and groups across the Colleges.	Reviewed annually Year 1 – Year 5.	Membership of committees and groups to demonstrate participation of those with disabilities.
Encourage students with disabilities 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, Student Union membership and where applicable non-curricular activities such as Students Union events and sporting activities etc.
Increase awareness of specific barriers faced by people with disabilities	Ongoing.	Increased awareness and understanding among staff and students of barriers experienced by people with disabilities.

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome
Promote the use of AccessAble website to encourage participation of prospective students and staff.	Annually and on-going Year 1 – Year 5.	Benchmark usage of AccessAble webpage.

7.2 Positive Attitudes

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome
Create an open an inclusive workplace culture that demonstrates respect and support for individuals experiencing mental ill health	Ongoing	Positive engagement, increased provision of information and resources on mental health support. Professional and confidential support available to both staff and student - Lena by Inspire.
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.
Consider development of a Disability Advisory Group involving staff and students with disabilities (initially at local level and then at sectoral level).	Three meetings per year	Development of communications and engagement strategies consultation processes in disability related matters, Screening of policies. Monitoring and evaluation of disability duties and action plan progress.

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome
Through the Widening Access Participation Plan increase the number of students with disabilities enrolling at the College	Annually	Raise educational awareness, aspirations and attainment amongst the target group. Evidence of increased applications and enrolments from students with disabilities.
Monitor and review the progress of the Disability Action Plan.	Annually August Year 1 – Year 5	Provision of update contained within Progress Report.