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CAREERS SERVICE

Careers Occupational Information Unit **Bulletin**

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE CAREERS in NORTHERN IRELAND

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Caroline McKeever, Curriculum Hub Manager in Health and Social Care and Vonnie McWilliams, DIAL Centre manager, North West Regional College (NWRC)



How the Design Innovation and Assisted Living (DIAL) centre at North West Regional College (NWRC) is contributing to the training and development of the modern health and social care workforce in NI

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Caroline McKeever, Curriculum Hub Manager for Health and Social Care, and **Vonnie McWilliams**, DIAL Manager, explain the role of the DIAL Centre, which officially launched in November 2019. Caroline and Vonnie work closely with stakeholders to ensure the DIAL centre meets its aims of delivering opportunities for learning and innovation in Health and Social Care, both for students, workforce, business and community.

What is the DIAL (Design Innovation Assisted Living) Centre?

Having officially launched in November 2019, the DIAL Centre, located at North West Regional College Derry/Londonderry campus, is the first health innovation hub of its kind in Northern Ireland. It provides a unique space to integrate education, business and the broad health and social care sector within a state-of-the-art facility.

What is the aim of the DIAL Centre?

The DIAL Centre's focus is to promote greater collaboration, learning and innovation that will support independence and a quality of life for greater numbers of people to live well. It improves collaboration and knowledge exchange across many vocational disciplines, such as IT, Engineering, Health & Social Care, and the arts, with a wraparound nurturance of innovation and escalation of business development and mentoring support.

How does the DIAL centre inspire those interested in working in the Health and Social sector to improve the living standards of those they care for?

The future of Health and Social Care requires a digital grasp as significant in supporting people to live independently, at home for longer, and in a way that they choose to. The DIAL centre, equipped with both high-level and easy-access technologies, creates an aspiration for all stakeholders to raise standards of health and social care for their clients, and to upskill the workforce to respond to increasingly complex health challenges by utilising the potential technologies:

- **Sophisticated technologies are demonstrated at the Centre** - individuals living with physical, cognitive or sensory impairment or disability can perform everyday tasks independently by using the different types of technology in different home environments.

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- **Individuals and their carers living with chronic and progressive health conditions, such as dementia, can explore best practice options to support their health care and wellbeing** - through the use of technologies available, as well as the design solutions that have been integrated into the design of the centre itself - the use of colour, light and space.
- **It is a single site demonstrator of product and service model solutions informed by the latest research and innovations which support the independence of the individual** - specialised equipment, e-Health, mainstream technology and smart bespoke digital (from Alexa to eye gaze equipment).



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How can the DIAL Centre help support students with their learning?

Using technology in teaching and learning, students and assessors are able to simulate practical care and reflect on practice, further enhancing the standard of care for real-world situations.

Who else can benefit from the DIAL Centre's innovations?

The DIAL Centre supports and provides advice clinics for clients and carers, Health and Social Care Trusts, organisations and businesses.

The DIAL Centre has supported a multitude of collaborative engagements across the Health and Social Care sector, as well as other vocational areas. It has firm links with organisations from the Housing sector, Adult Health and Social Care sector, Universities, Awarding Organisations, and across several professional disciplines including Occupational Therapy, Social Care Workers and Nursing.

The DIAL Centre offers a range of masterclasses and workshops for care providers. The Health and Social Care Curriculum Hub in Northern Ireland, also located at North West Regional College, provides opportunities for health and social care employers to link with Further Education Colleges. This enhances the quality of the courses and qualifications that are offered at all Colleges in Northern Ireland, ensuring they meet industry standards, are relevant and current, and most importantly, support the needs of the end users in Health and Social Care.

What's next for the DIAL Centre?

The next steps for the DIAL Centre involve the launch of **NWRC Academy of Enhanced Care and Clinical Skills**, supporting the growth and development of those working in the Health and Social Care sector. The Academy offers continuous professional development opportunities

for health care professionals. The Academy also facilitates the opportunity for Health and Social Care students to undertake additional short courses, enhancing their healthcare skills as they continue on their progression journey.

For more information, please visit the [DIAL centre](#)

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