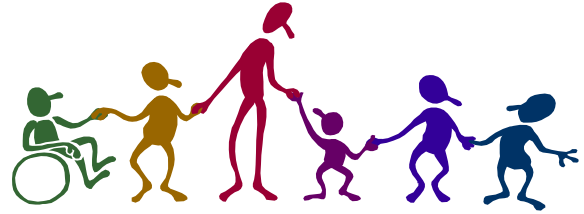

**DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1995
[AS AMENDED BY THE
DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION (NI) ORDER 2006]**

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

2019 – 2024

NI Further Education Colleges





Alternative Formats

If you require this plan in an alternative format (such as easy read, Braille, audio formats (CD, MP3 or DAISY), 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:-

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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; and
- 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 sector level in the development of this plan and looks forward to achieving the necessary change for people with disabilities.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 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 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 they propose to fulfil these duties in relation to their functions. This action plan will also encompass Colleges' efforts in relation to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SENDO).

1.3 Commitments:

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

1.3.1 Promotion of Disability Duties

We are committed to the promotion of the disability duties throughout the Colleges.

1.3.2 Resources

The Colleges are committed to allocating the necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) in order to implement effectively this plan and continue to develop objectives and targets relating to the disability duties. The budget allocation will be determined on an annual basis based on the action plan.

1.3.3 Communication to staff

The Colleges will ensure the effective communication of the plan to staff. Staff will be provided with information on the plan via the Colleges' internal communication mechanisms.

1.3.4 Internal Arrangements

The Colleges are committed to ensuring that internal arrangements are in place in order to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this Disability Action Plan is effectively implemented.

1.3.5 Training

The Colleges are committed to providing ongoing training for staff on disability equality legislation.

1.4 Point of Contact

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this Disability Action Plan will be the College representatives on the Northern Ireland Colleges Equality Forum and the point of contact for the Forum will be:

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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.

The Colleges are committed to carrying out a five-year review of the Disability Action Plan.

A copy of this plan and the annual progress reports will be made available for all staff to access on each College website.

1.6 Functions

The Colleges' Corporate/Development Plans provide the overarching framework within which the Colleges will take forward the best interests of the staff and students, setting out each College's vision, values and corporate goals and taking cognisance of its operating environment.

1.7 Policies

To support and implement the functions/services the Colleges operate within policy guidelines laid down by the Department for the Economy (DfE), and according to policies as agreed through sectoral negotiation or through the Colleges' management/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 is difficult for Colleges to achieve within the FE Sector in relation to public appointments as it is DfE's responsibility to appoint Governing Body members. Although the only public life appointments made are to the Governing Body, 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 undertaken a number of previous measures to promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability and to encourage their participation in public life. Already there are many examples of good practice in existence. Some of which are outlined below:-

- Training for staff;
- Use of positive imagery in documents/promotion literature;
- Engagement with groups representing people with a disability;
- Encouraging the participation of disabled people on committees and groups across the Colleges;
- Further development of partnerships between the Colleges and the disability sector; and
- Promotion of the Access Able website to encourage participation of prospective students.

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 consulting with people with a disability on the implementation of the plan.

5 TIMESCALES

- 5.1 The measures are allocated across various departments in the Colleges and run concurrently throughout the life of the plan. As such, they are considered to carry equal weight.

6 MONITORING

- 6.1 The Colleges will monitor and review outcomes arising from the Disability Action Plan on an annual basis.

7 ACTION PLAN

A detailed Action Plan is set out below.

7.1 Public Life Measures

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome
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.
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.
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, Student Union Membership and where applicable non-curricular activities such as students union and sporting activities etc.
Increase awareness of specific barriers faced by people with a	Ongoing.	Increased awareness and understanding of barriers faced by people with a disability.

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome
disability including through linking in with National Awareness days or weeks.		
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.

7.2 Positive Attitudes

ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome
Create an open and inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those with mental ill health	Ongoing	Positive engagement, increased provision of information and monitoring.
Explore the scope of offering meaningful placements and work shadowing and volunteering for people with a disability	Ongoing	Develop capacity of people with a disability to find employment.
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 (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.
Through Widening Participation scheme increase number of students with a disability entering the College	Annually	Raise educational awareness, aspirations and educational attainment amongst the target group.
Monitor and review the progress of the Disability Action Plan.	Annually August Year 1 – Year 5	Provision of update contained within Progress Report.

