South West College
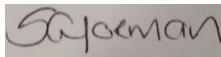
Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties

Annual Progress Report

Contact details:

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• Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan	As above ☒ Name: Telephone: Email:
Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Signature:	*SGorman*

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

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

1 In 2024-2025, 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.

The South West College remains committed to promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations across all Section 75 categories to staff, students and the wider community. During this reporting period, several key developments were implemented in line with our Equality Scheme commitments.

Review of Curriculum Materials and CPD Content:

The South West College in collaboration with our Teaching and Learning Advisor and the College's Workforce Development team undertook a review of its curriculum materials. This included revising the content of our Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Days to better incorporate and promote equality and good relations across the Section 75 categories.

Training delivered:

- **Equality and Diversity** – Inclusive language
- **Mental Health**
- **Special Educational Needs and Disability Order** (SENDO)
- **Recruitment and Selection training** (Including refresher training sessions for management and staff involved in the recruitment).
- **Autism Training** (Facilitated by Autism NI)
- **Bespoke Dyslexia Training** (Facilitated by British Dyslexia Association)
- **Neurodiversity Awareness Session for Staff** (Facilitated by the Cedar Foundation – Lunchtime sessions)

Equality Impact

By embedding this content into the College's curriculum and staff development programmes, we aim to promoted equality of opportunities and foster an inclusive learning environment. This ensures that students from all backgrounds feel represented and supported, particularly across Section 75 categories including:

- People with and without disabilities
- Racial and ethnic groups
- Sexual orientation
- Religious belief

This proactive approach helps to remove barriers to participation, demonstrates the College's commitment to equality, inclusion whilst enhancing the visibility of those underrepresented groups within the College community.

Good Relations:

Planning in advance our CPD Days we identify key areas of need and delivered targeted awareness sessions where it was possible. These sessions promote and demonstrated the College's commitments to accessible and inclusion.

Outcomes: feedback from staff after attending CP Days they felt they had a gained a better understanding, great response back from Eden Consultancy and the Cedar Foundation sessions were engaging and informative, greater confidence addressing sensitive topics and managing challenging situations effectively.

AccessAble - Campus Accessibility Audit

During this academic year, it was identified that the 'Workhouse' building did not have an AccessAble Report available on the College website. In response, the Equality / HR Officer in collaboration with our Estates team, arranged a site visit. A comprehensive accessibility audit was subsequently conducted, and an updated audit was completed across all campuses.

Equality Impact:

The inclusion of the Workhouse in the College's accessibility resources directly advances equality of opportunity for staff, students, and members of the wider community particular those with a disability. In line with our Section 75 obligations, the removal of physical barriers and the provision of detailed accessibility information empowers individuals to plan and navigate the campus with confidently. This support and ensures full participation in academic, professional, and social life ensuring that our facilities are inclusive and accessible to all.

Good Relations:

This strengthens our good relations by visibly reinforcing the College's commitment to inclusivity and respect for all individuals, regardless of ability. By promoting awareness and understanding of accessibility needs it fosters a culture of emplathy and shared responsibility among staff and students, contributing to a more welcoming campus environment and strengthening good relations across College community.

Outcome:

The 'Workhouse' building has now been formally added to South West College's list of accessible facilities and is included in the AccessAble directory.

Directly supporting our Section 75 obligations by making our campus more inclusive and enabling fuller participation for people with disabilities.

Equality & Good Relations Staff Training Programme

Initiative: Inclusive Practice and Training for Staff

Our Equality and HR Officer introduced a mandatory training programme for all new staff titled Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI). The programme covers key areas including:

- Legal obligations (e.g. Section 75)
- Protected characteristics
- Inclusive language and Communication
- Unconscious bias
- Duties and responsibilities in promoting equality and good relations

Delivered online by the College's Equality & HR Officer, the training is tailored to meet the needs of both teaching and support staff raising awareness of our duties and responsibilities in promoting equality and good relations.

Autism NI Impact Award Training:

In collaboration with multiple departments the College secured funding to invite Autism NI to deliver specialist training. This initiative supports our strategic goal of establishing a dedicated subcommittee to better support autistic staff, students, and members of the wider community.

Training was scheduled on a CPD/non-teaching day to maximise accessibility and participation. Sessions focused on:

- Increasing awareness of autism and neurodiversity
- Providing foundational understanding of autistic experiences
- Equipping staff with practical tools and strategies to foster inclusive environments

The programme also reinforced legal compliance under the Autism Act (NI) 2011 and relevant equality legislation, including the implementation of reasonable adjustments and inclusive policies.

Equality Impact:

This initiative promotes equality of opportunity by equipping staff with the knowledge and skills to identify and address barriers faced by colleagues, students, and the wider community. It supports individuals from diverse backgrounds, as outlined in Section 75, including:

- Race and ethnic background,
- Disability
- Gender
- Sexual orientation.

Good Relations:

The training programme fosters good relations by:

- Encouraging respect and empathy
- Challenging stereotypes and unconscious bias
- Promoting understanding of diverse identities and experiences.

Autism Inclusion Initiative (2025/2026): Establish an Autism Working Group, supported by a Governing Body member, to advance neurodiversity awareness and inclusive practices.

Outcomes:

- Three staff members successfully completed their certificate in Understanding Autism and will lead the Autism NI Impact Award rollout, identifying training needs and championing inclusive practices across campuses
- To ensure continued impact, the 'Teaching and Learning Advisor' will follow up with staff post-CPD Day's to review current practices, changes in practice and identify further opportunities for improvement.

Strategic Planning:

1. 'The Neuroplastic Mind'

Hosted by the Childcare and Early Childhood Studies Department, this conference explored how early relational experiences shape brain development and biology.

Equality Impact:

Enhanced understanding of neurodevelopment supports inclusive teaching practices, particularly for children with developmental differences.

Good Relations Impact:

Increased empathy and awareness fostering respectful and supportive interactions with children and families from diverse backgrounds.

Outcome:

Highly attended event among the wider community and positive feedback. Those that attended the event from early year settings reported adapting their teaching methods and practices to better support early developmental needs.

2. Inclusive Recruitment Practices

The HR Department revised recruitment practices include inclusive language, anonymised shortlisting, and mandatory training including refresher training for panel members.

Impact: Removes the potential for unconscious bias, promotes fair access, demonstrates compliance with our equality duties, builds confidence and transparency in our recruitment process.

Outcome: Confidences and transparency in our recruitment practices.

3. Student-Led Cultural Celebration Events

Led by the College's Social Inclusion Department, students organised events to celebrate and raise awareness on cultures, religious beliefs, gender identities, and more, as part of work-based learning projects.

Impact: The aim was to promote visibility and inclusion, cross-community engagement and create mutual respect and understanding.

Outcome: staff and students engaged well with each event - stopping at stands to picked up leaflets, sample food, and take part in in cultural quizzes. The initiative increased participation and visibility of minority groups strengthened good relations, and enhanced awareness of the College's Social Inclusion Department. It also supported students facing barriers and challenges to education by promoting inclusion and understanding.

4. Accessible Communication Formats

All public-facing materials are now available in alternative formats, including large print and Easy Read. Materials and resources continue to be reviewed for accessibility, and this remains an ongoing area of development.

Equality Impact: Improved access for disabled individuals supporting barriers and inclusiveness.

Outcome: Improves accessibility, services and resources across the College.

5. Mental Health and Wellbeing Support

Mental health and digital wellbeing were key themes in CPD (Continuing Professional Development) days for academic staff. For support staff, the Connect and Plan Day focused on the theme 'Wellbeing at Work', reflecting our commitment to fostering a supportive and positive workplace culture. The event featured guest speaker Emma Weaver, and a personal reflection from CEO / Principle Celine McCartan.

Equality Impact:

Supports staff across all Section 75 categories by promoting mental health awareness and resilience.

Good Relations Impact:
Fosters a culture of openness, empathy, and mutual support.

Outcome:

The events reinforced our College's core values of respect, accountability, engagement, and commitment in supporting wellbeing.

Equality Working Group

Working groups such as the Equality Working Group and the Autism Working were established to promote inclusive practices across the College. These champions serve as advocates for equality, helping to identify and address barriers, challenges and strategies while fostering a culture of respect and inclusion.

Equality Impact:

Equality principles and practices are continuing to be embedded across the College into everyday operations through working groups and collaboration. Each working group and collaboration with a department and staff member plays a key role in developing inclusive behaviours, supporting colleagues, and encouraging open dialogue around accessibility and inclusion.

Outcome: The working groups have helped raise awareness, address barriers and challenges and identify strategies. They have also established clear points of contact for staff and students to raise concerns, seek support, and address issues collaboratively. These groups provide a valuable forum for open discussion and collective problem-solving, reinforcing our commitment to continuous improvement in promoting equality and inclusion.

6. Community Outreach and Partnership Building

The South West College has and continues to develop strong partnerships with local organisations to deliver joint initiatives that promote equality, inclusion and good relations. These initiatives have extended beyond the College campus, positively impacting the wider community.

Intergenerational Café a cross-community initiative bringing together members of the local community of all ages, from primary school children to nursing home residents, to celebrate diversity and promote learning and understanding across generations.

Equality Impact:

Supports inclusion across age groups and promotes equal participation in community life.

Good Relations Impact:

Fosters mutual respect and understanding across generations, strengthening community bonds.

Outcome:

The event was a huge success; sessions were engaging from participants and community partners.

Social Inclusion Department – Targeted Programmes

The Social Inclusion Department has played a pivotal role in enhancing service delivery, outreach and partnership building through targeted programmes that address barriers to education, employment, and personal development. Each initiative has contributed to a more inclusive environment for individuals across Section 75 categories.

Youthscape Plus:

Tailored support for young people aged 16–24 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), many of whom face complex social and emotional challenges.

Section 75 Impact:

- **Age**: Empowering young people with life skills, boosting confidence and employability.
- **Gender & Disability**: Supported young people and neurodivergent individuals through mentoring and mental health workshops.

Going Places:

Focused on re-engaging individuals with learning difficulties or disabilities in education and community life through creative and experiential learning.

Section 75 Impact:

- **Disability**: Improved access to learning through adapted resources and inclusive teaching methods.
- **Dependants**: Offered flexible scheduling to accommodate carers and parents.

STEP UP & WRAP:

Intensive support for individuals facing multiple barriers to education and employment, including mental health, housing, and substance misuse.

Section 75 Impact:

- **Marital Status & Gender**: Supported single parents and increase in women participation with the aim of supporting women returns into the workplace.
- **Disability**: tailored interventions for individuals with mental health conditions.

College Connect:

Strengthened pathways into further education for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, including rural and minority communities.

Section 75 Impact:

Racial Group & Political Opinion: Increased participation from minority ethnic and migrant groups.

Religious Belief: Promoted cross-community engagement and understanding.

REAP

Targeted young people at risk of disengagement, offering alternative education pathways and vocational training.

Section 75 Impact:

- **Age & Gender**: Reduced early school leaving especially among young males.
- **Political Opinion**: Fostered inclusion in areas affected by legacy issues and social division.

Labour Market Partnership

Collaborated with local employers to create inclusive employment opportunities and skills development programmes.

Section 75 Impact:

- **Racial Group & Sexual Orientation**: Promoted workplace diversity and inclusive practices.

- **Disability**: Facilitated reasonable adjustments and supported disabled individuals into sustainable employment.

Widening Access and Participation

The Colleges run initiatives to attract students from underrepresented groups – including carers, ethnic minorities, and those from low-income backgrounds - directly supports Section 75.

Flexible Pathways: Offering part-time, online, and modular courses helps people with dependants, disabilities, women returners, or work commitments access education.

Financial Support: Bursaries, fee waivers, and technology funds reduce economic barriers for disadvantaged students.

7. **Autism Impact Award:**

The College is actively working towards achieving the Autism NI Impact Award, a recognition of our commitment to enhancing inclusive practices and improving the experiences of neurodivergent individuals across all campuses.

2025/2026 Progress Plan:

To strengthen leadership and oversight of equality and inclusion initiatives, a Governing Body member will be appointed to join the Equality Working Group. This will reinforce strategic accountability and ensure that neurodiversity and broader equality priorities remain central to decision-making and policy development.

Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

As part of our ongoing commitment to promoting equality, diversity, social inclusion and a promoting a positive learning environment for all the College's Equality / HR Officer, in collaboration with the Social Inclusion Department, organised a series of lunchtime **Neurodiversity Awareness Sessions** through the **Cedar Foundation** for both staff and students.

The primary aims of these sessions were to:

- Enhance understanding and awareness of neurodiversity within educational and workplace contexts

- Provide practical strategies to support neurodivergent individuals

- Foster a more inclusive and empathetic College culture

These interactive sessions offered valuable insights into the lived experiences of neurodivergent individuals and encouraged open dialogue around support needs and inclusive practices. Each session was engaging and interactive, with participant feedback highlighting the importance of such initiatives in cultivating a more informed and supportive culture for all.

Attendance grew steadily reflecting the increasing interest and relevance of neurodiversity awareness within our College.

Staff Training and Development Events

Throughout the 2024/2025 academic year, the College actively hosted and participated in a range of staff training events aimed at promoting and embedding Equality, Diversity, and Social Inclusion across its campuses. These events provided valuable opportunities for learning, reflection, and professional development.

Key events included:

- **Changing Attitudes to Aging** – Hosted at Omagh Library, this session focused on shifting perceptions around aging in the Omagh and Fermanagh communities.

- **Recruitment and Selection Training** – Delivered by 'Heads Together', this training supported staff involved in interview panels to ensure fair and inclusive hiring practices.

- **SWC Early Years Conference –** '*The Neuroplastic Mind*' – A dynamic professional development event for Early Years professionals across the South West region. Highlights included keynote speaker Orla Connelly (Safeguarding Board NI), contributions from the Regional Trauma Network, and a closing workshop co-facilitated by Dr. Joanne Menary, Consultant Clinical Psychologist.

- **Neurodiversity Awareness Session** Facilitated by Cedar Foundation

- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusive Language Training** – All new staff receive this foundational training from the College's Equality and HR Officer. The session outlines staff responsibilities, introduces key support

contacts, and explains the College's statutory duties under equality legislation.

- **GoToWebinar**: The Shape of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in Northern Ireland After the Elections – Presented by Conor Curran

- **Supporting Autistic People in Employment** – Hosted by Allstate and delivered by the Equality Commission, this event focused on inclusive employment practices.

- **Connect and Plan Day** – A collaborative day for staff to reflect, plan, and engage.

- **Good Relations Week – Activities and Events Recap** As part of Good Relations Week, a vibrant series of activities and events took place, celebrating cultural diversity, inclusion, and global connection:

- **Fun Quiz**: Facilitated by Fearghal O'Boyle (Youthscape+ and Partnership Organisation), this lively event brought participants together in a spirit of friendly competition and shared learning.

- **Cultural Diversity Tasting – Traditional Desserts Afternoon**: The Social Inclusion Team and Youthscape+ participants planned, prepared, and hosted an international afternoon tea, offering a delicious array of traditional and Mediterranean tasters to celebrate cultural diversity.

- **Global Celebration with Local Schools**: We welcomed over 100 pupils from Jones Memorial Primary School and Holy Trinity Primary School to our Erne Campus for a hands-on celebration of food, culture, and connection. Activities included:

Bodhrán Making with Paul Cassidy – pupils explored rhythm and tradition through this iconic Irish instrument.

Tai Chi sessions led by Confucius Tutors – offering a moment of calm and cultural insight.

Dumpling Making – a fun and tasty dive into global cuisine.

Global Fruits Exploration – learning and tasting about fruits from around the world and their origins.

Food Sampling Stations – a delicious journey through international flavours.

Good Relations Workshops – delivered in conjunction with TIDES, fostering understanding and dialogue.

Recognising the Good Friday Agreement – a reflective session led by TIDES and Youthscape+ highlighting its significance in promoting peace and inclusion.

Good Relations Continued:

Easter Arts & Crafts Event – Omagh Campus

The College was delighted to welcome Year 2 pupils from Gibson Primary School and Holy Family Primary School to our Omagh Campus for a festive Easter-themed arts and crafts event. Hosted by our Level 3 Childcare students, the day featured:

- Card making
- Bingo
- Storytelling
- Healthy fruit snacks

This event provided a valuable opportunity for our SWC students to apply their learning in a real-world setting while fostering positive relationships with local schools, communities and young learners.

Training, Awareness Sessions and Focus Groups Included:

Eden Consultancy

To further support our mission of creating a diverse and inclusive community, the **'Step Up'** programme welcomed **Rebecca McCullagh** from **Eden Consultancy** to deliver a series of impactful training sessions under the theme **'The BIG 4'**. These sessions aimed to deepen understanding and equip staff with the practical strategic to support neurodivergent individuals and young people experiencing emotional challenges.

1. Autism: Myths, Facts, and All You Need to Know

Objective: To build participants' confidence in understanding Autism and provide strategies to effectively support Autistic individuals.
Overview:
This session explored the definition of Autism, challenged common stereotypes, and provided a comprehensive understanding of how to support Autistic individuals in educational and social settings.

2. ADHD: Understanding and Support

Objective: To develop a clear understanding of ADHD and introduce practical strategies for supporting individuals with ADHD.
Overview:
Participants examined the neuroscience behind ADHD, dispelled common

misconceptions, and learned actionable approaches to better support those with the condition.

3. Understanding and Supporting Behaviour

Objective: To recognise behaviour as a form of communication and learn how to respond supportively.
Overview:
This workshop focused on interpreting the underlying causes of behaviour and introduced practical tools to support young people during challenging moments.

4. Supporting Stress and Anxiety in Young People

Objective: To understand how anxiety manifests in young people and how to provide effective support.
Overview:
With 86% of young people aged 16–25 reportedly experiencing anxiety, this session explored the neuroscience of stress and anxiety and offered practical strategies to support mental wellbeing.

Equality Working Group (EWG) Meetings

The Equality Working Group continues to meet once per academic term, serving as a dedicated forum for advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion across the College.

The EWG comprises both **Support and Academic staff**, alongside **student representation**, ensuring a broad and inclusive range of perspectives are considered.

These meetings serve as a platform to:

- Review progress against equality objectives

- Share best practices and successful initiatives

- Identify areas for development and improvement

- Promote cross – departmental collaboration

The participation of staff and students in the EWG reflects the College's ongoing commitment to embedding equality and inclusion into every aspect of college life.

Sector Equality Working Group

The Sector Equality Working Group meets once per academic term, bringing together representatives from each College to share best practices, raise and address concerns, and offer mutual support and advice. It serves as a collaborative space to advance work in key areas and develop initiatives that promote equality,

diversity, and inclusion. These meetings offer a valuable opportunity for learning, alignment, and progress toward sector-wide equality objectives.

These meetings provide a valuable opportunity for learning and alignment on sector - wide equality objectives.

Celebration of Success:

Youthscape+ hosted their Celebration of Success event a pioneering Cross-Border Good Relations Programme supported by PEACEPLUS and managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). This initiative is dedicated to creating positive relationships among young people across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Youthscape+ project centres around core themes of Personal Development, Good Relations, and Citizenship, which are crucial for creating an inclusive and progressive society.

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*).

- Policy Screening Protocols: Continue to strengthen equality screening processes for new and revised policies, ensuring consistent consideration of equality impacts.
- Introduced anonymous recruitment processes for all recruitment roles.
- Continues to identify training needs, support staff development working in collaboration with other department to support the delivery of training sessions organising informative lunchtime training sessions.
- Reviewed 'AccessAble' identified the 'Workhouse' building wasn't available on our College Website. An audit was arranged for the 'Workhouse' building and other areas of the College was reviewed and updated.
- Partnered with local minority-led organisation through Social Inclusion Department and Community Outreach Partnerships.
- The College has commenced our missions of achieving our Autism NI Impact Award training has been facilitated by Autism NI and collectively the College in collaboration with other departments are working towards achieving our Autism NI Impact Award. This initiative aims to enhance our practices, understanding, and improve the overall experiences of neurodivergent individuals.
- Progress Plans for 2025/2026: Elect a Governing Body member to join the Equality Working Group, strengthening leadership and oversight of equality initiatives.
- Autism Inclusion Initiative (2025/2026): Establish an Autism Working Group, supported by a Governing Body member, to advance neurodiversity awareness and inclusive practices across the organisation.

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:

Our Equality Scheme for 2024–25 focused on promoting inclusive recruitment practices, improving accessibility, embedding and raising the awareness around equality.

Policy Development: Revised equality screening protocols ensured that new and updated policies were assessed for their impact on protected groups, improving transparency and inclusivity. Policies reviewed and updated included:

Carers leave policy to be more inclusive.

Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy reviewed and renamed Student Disciplinary

Practice and Procedures: Staff training initiatives - including Autism NI, Good Relations Week recognition, and workshops on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusive Language for all new staff - have been implemented to enhance awareness, build knowledge, and promote inclusive practices across the organisation.

Service Delivery: Events such as Good Relations Week, featuring cultural diversity tastings and awareness activities, along with inclusive educational workshops led by our Social Inclusion Department, have actively promoted good relations and strengthened community and social engagement.

Monitoring and Reporting: Continue to monitor, evaluate and report on our Fair Employment Monitoring Returns, Equality and Good Relations Duties – Annual Progress Report regularly liaising with the College's Senior Leadership Teams.

These changes reflect a proactive approach to embedding equality and good relations into the College's core functions.

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 College has revised its recruitment practices to include anonymised shortlisting, aligning with equality legislation and recognised good practices. This change reflects our ongoing commitment to inclusive and fair recruitment and selection process.

This change was introduced to improve integrity in the recruitment process, removing the potential for unconscious bias and ensuring a fair and transparent recruitment process, particularly for individuals from Section 75 categories such as

religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, men and women generally, persons with a disability, dependants.

Our Carers Policy was revised to improved support for individuals with dependants' responsibilities. These changes aim to ensure greater flexibility and promote inclusivity, aligning with our Equality Scheme commitments. The policy updates are expected to positively impact individuals within Section 75 categories, particularly in relation to dependants, gender and marital status.

SWC Higher Education Community Scholarship Awards 2024/25

As part of South West College's commitment to Widening Access and Participation, we are offering five scholarships valued at £10,400 over three years to students who are due to complete their A-Levels / Level 3 programme this summer. Three scholarships will be offered to pupils from local feeder schools, and two scholarships will be offered to SWC students in full-time study on Highter Education programmes

Impact of Social Inclusion Programmes on Service Delivery and Section 75 Groups (2024–25)

The Social Inclusion Department has played a pivotal role in enhancing service delivery within the College and the wider community through targeted programmes that address barriers to education, employment, and personal development. Each initiative has contributed to a more inclusive, responsive, and equitable environment for individuals across Section 75 categories.

Youthscape Plus:

Provided tailored support for young people aged 16–24 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), many of whom face complex social and emotional challenges.

Section 75 Impact:

- **Age**: Empowering young people with life skills, boosting confidence and employability.
- **Gender & Disability**: Supported young people and neurodivergent individuals through mentoring and mental health workshops.

Going Places:

Focused on re-engaging individuals with learning difficulties or disabilities in education and community life through creative and experiential learning.

Section 75 Impact:

- **Disability**: Improved access to learning through adapted resources and inclusive teaching methods.

- **Dependants**: Offered flexible scheduling to accommodate carers and parents.

STEP UP & WRAP:

Provided intensive support for individuals facing multiple barriers to education and employment, including mental health, housing, and substance misuse.

Section 75 Impact:

- **Marital Status & Gender**: Supported single parents and women in transition.

- **Disability**: Offered tailored interventions for individuals with mental health conditions.

- **Gender**: Increase in women participation with the aim of supporting women returns into the workplace.

College Connect:

Strengthened pathways into further education for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, including rural and minority communities.

Section 75 Impact:

Racial Group & Political Opinion: Increased participation from minority ethnic and migrant groups.

Religious Belief: Promoted cross-community engagement and understanding.

REAP

Targeted young people at risk of disengagement, offering alternative education pathways and vocational training.

Section 75 Impact:

- **Age & Gender**: Reduced early school leaving among young males.

- **Political Opinion**: Fostered inclusion in areas affected by legacy issues and social division.

Labour Market Partnership

Collaborated with local employers to create inclusive employment opportunities and skills development programmes.

Section 75 Impact:

- **Racial Group & Sexual Orientation**: Promoted workplace diversity and inclusive hiring practices.
- **Disability**: Facilitated reasonable adjustments and supported disabled individuals into sustainable employment.

Overall Service Delivery Impact:

- Increased engagement and retention across hard-to-reach groups
- Improved cross-sector collaboration with health, education, and community partners
- Strengthened capacity to deliver person-centred, trauma-informed services.

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):*

Promotion of good relations

The Social Inclusion Department has played a pivotal role in promoting and funding good relations within the College and the wider community through targeted programmes that address and recognising aspects of our Equality Scheme and across Section 75 categories.

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Screening and impact assessment:

The College reviewed our 'Positive Behaviour Policy' in recognition of the need to treat all students according to their individual needs. The original policy focused primarily on student behaviours and outlined general expectations of acceptable conduct.

Following the review, the policy was revised and restructured as a Disciplinary Policy to provide clearer guidance and better support for the College, staff, and students. The updated policy now includes a defined Code of Conduct and places greater emphasis on individual student profiles, ensuring that expectations are tailored to each learner's circumstances and needs and not adversely impacting on equality of opportunities.

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

Through the EQIA and consultation exercise, it was identified that the presence of identifiable information on application forms could unintentionally disadvantage individuals from Section 75 categories. In response, the College introduced anonymised recruitment and selection practices via the 'GetGot' platform to mitigate unconscious bias and promote equality of opportunity. This change supports fairer access to employment, particularly for underrepresented groups. Additionally, anonymised shortlisting and mandatory recruitment and refresher training for panel members were implemented to further embed inclusive recruitment practices.

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

Fair Employment Monitoring Returns by SOC Groups and Gender:

Employee trends:

- Professional roles saw the largest increase, especially among female employees.
- Administrative roles also grew, with a strong female majority.
- Associate professional roles declined slightly, but gender balance remained steady.

Application Trends:

- Professional roles remained the most applied-for category.
- Administrative & Secretarial and Associate Professional roles saw consistent interest.
- Slight drop in overall applications, especially among females.
- Community Background Unknowns decreased in 2025, suggesting improved data collection or applicant disclosure.

Appointee Trends:

- Significant drop in total number of appointees in 2025, possibly due to fewer vacancies, recruitment stability.
- Gender remained consistent, with females making up the majority of appointees.

Community Background:

Employees:

Seen a slight increase in Protestant representation and decrease in Roman Catholic employees. Unknowns also reduced, indicating improved data collection.

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

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

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Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments <u>and</u> 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

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

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

During the 2024–25 reporting period, we maintained our commitment to assessing compliance with Section 75 statutory duties through the systematic screening of all new and revised policies. This process ensures that equality considerations are embedded at the earliest stages of policy development.

All policies were subject to equality screening using our standard template, which assesses potential impacts on the nine equality categories. Where necessary, policies were referred for full Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs). Screening outcomes were documented and made available to staff and stakeholders, reinforcing transparency and accountability.

This approach supports the integration of equality duties into decision-making processes and helps ensure that our services and practices promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Feedback from staff and external stakeholders has been largely positive. Many welcomed the transparency of the process and the opportunity to contribute to policy development through consultation. Stakeholders noted that the screening process has become more consistent and accessible, with clearer documentation and rationale for decisions. Some also highlighted the value of early engagement, which allowed for more meaningful input and better-informed outcomes.

This feedback has reinforced our commitment to continuous improvement and has informed minor adjustments to our screening templates and guidance to enhance clarity and usability.

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:

During the 2024–25 reporting period, Section 75 statutory duties were embedded into performance plans for key staff, particularly those involved in policy development, review, and implementation.

This included:

Managers and policy leads responsible for screening new and revised policies and procedures for equality impacts.

Staff overseeing service delivery and strategic planning, ensuring equality considerations are reflected in operational decisions including participation in Governance Meetings.

Performance objectives for these roles included the timely and effective completion of equality screenings, the use of appropriate templates, and the documentation of outcomes. These responsibilities are monitored through our Policy Repository Database.

Impact and Feedback:

This integration reinforced accountability and ensured that policies, procedures, and guidance are regularly reviewed, monitored, and updated as required. It also emphasises that equality screening is not a standalone task, but a core component of policy development.

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:

During the 2024–25 period, objectives and performance measures aligned with Section 75 statutory duties were embedded across all levels of planning:

- Incorporating equality - particularly for staff involved in policy development and review and service delivery and strategic planning.
- Aligning strategic goals with the commitments outlined in the Equality Scheme to ensure that equality of opportunity and good relations remain central to

decision-making. Senior management were actively engaged at all levels, with the Equality and HR Officer consistently involved to ensure leadership remained informed of key changes, progress, and developments.

- Operational Business Plans incorporated specific actions such as screening new and revised policies, providing staff training on equality duties, and actively promoting equality and inclusion through engagement initiatives.

This integration ensured a consistent and organisation-wide approach to compliance, accountability, and continuous improvement in promoting equality and inclusion.

Equality action plans/measures

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

Actions completed:

Actions Completed:

Actions ongoing: 8

Actions to Commence: 1

Click or tap here to enter text.

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)*:

Objective	Action/Measure	Section 75 Categories Addressed	Timeline	Lead Responsibility
1. Improve Access to Information	Ensure all student-facing materials are available in accessible formats (e.g. large print, Easy Read)	Disability, Age	Ongoing	All Departments to play a part in ensuring all documents are formatted and accessible

2. Inclusive Curriculum Design	Embed AI (**A**ccessible and **I**nclusion) themes into curriculum across departments	All categories	Ongoing	Curriculum Leads
3. Staff Training	Deliver equality and Inclusion training to all staff	All categories	Annual	HR & Equality Officer
4. Outreach & Participation	Partner with community groups to increase enrolment from underrepresented groups	Racial Group, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Disability Religion	Ongoing	All Department with Support from Social Inclusion Department
5. Monitoring & Evaluation	Collect and analyse data on staff and student	All categories	Annual	HR / Equality Officer
6. Support Services	Expand mental health and wellbeing services	Sexual Orientation, Disability	Ongoing	Staff: Inspire Support Hub now Lena by Inspire Students: Student Services
7. Physical Accessibility	Audit and upgrade campus facilities to ensure full accessibility	Disability, Age	Ongoing	Estates
8. Promote Good Relations	Host events, forums and information sessions to build understanding among students and staff	All categories	Ongoing	Student Services, Social Inclusion Department and Equality & HR Officer.

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:

- The Sector Equality Co-ordinators Forum in relation to the promotion of equality throughout the six FE Colleges
- Staff through exit questionnaires to ensure there were no issues in relation to equality of opportunity for staff

12   In the 2024-25 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently <u>used</u> 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:

Click or tap here to enter text.

14   Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2024-25 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☒ No

☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

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

11 Policy consultations conducted with screening assessment presented.

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

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

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

0 Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

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)*

☒ 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:

Not Applicable

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 monitoring of College policies on an annual basis following their equality screening continued during the reporting period.
- A number of student surveys continued to be carried out to identify any areas of concern that students may have experienced during their educational journey at the College.
- The College continued to monitor staff's experience of the College as an equal
- opportunities employer via exit interviews, In addition the Fair Employment Monitoring Return is completed annually and reported to the College's Governing Body.
- The College continued to monitor its Complaints and Compliments Policy to ensure fair participation and the promotion of equality of opportunity for individuals accessing the College's service provision.
- Success rates and retention figures continued to be monitored to address concerns and improve service provision as necessary

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.

Staff Training and Development Events

Throughout the 2024/2025 academic year, the College actively hosted and participated in a range of staff training events aimed at promoting and embedding

Equality, Diversity, and Social Inclusion across its campuses. These events provided valuable opportunities for learning, reflection, and professional development.

Key events included:

- Changing Attitudes to Aging – Hosted at Omagh Library, this session focused on shifting perceptions around aging in the Omagh and Fermanagh communities.
- Recruitment and Selection Training – Delivered by 'Heads Together', this training supported staff involved in interview panels to ensure fair and inclusive hiring practices.
- SWC Early Years Conference – 'The Neuroplastic Mind' – A dynamic professional development event for Early Years professionals across the South West region. Highlights included keynote speaker Orla Connelly (Safeguarding Board NI), contributions from the Regional Trauma Network, and a closing workshop co-facilitated by Dr. Joanne Menary, Consultant Clinical Psychologist.
- Neurodiversity Awareness Session Facilitated by Cedar Foundation
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusive Language Training – All new staff receive this foundational training from the College's Equality and HR Officer. The session outlines staff responsibilities, introduces key support contacts, and explains the College's statutory duties under equality legislation.
- GoToWebinar: The Shape of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in Northern Ireland After the Elections – Presented by Conor Curran
- Supporting Autistic People in Employment – Hosted by Allstate and delivered by the Equality Commission, this event focused on inclusive employment practices.
- Connect and Plan Day – A collaborative day for staff to reflect, plan, and engage.
- Good Relations Week – Activities and Events Recap As part of Good Relations Week, a vibrant series of activities and events took place, celebrating cultural diversity, inclusion, and global connection:
- Fun Quiz: Facilitated by Fearghal O'Boyle (Youthscape+ and Partnership Organisation), this lively event brought participants together in a spirit of friendly competition and shared learning.
- Cultural Diversity Tasting – Traditional Desserts Afternoon: The Social Inclusion Team and Youthscape+ participants planned, prepared, and hosted an international afternoon tea, offering a delicious array of traditional and Mediterranean tasters to celebrate cultural diversity.
- Global Celebration with Local Schools: We welcomed over 100 pupils from Jones Memorial Primary School and Holy Trinity Primary School to our Erne

Campus for a hands-on celebration of food, culture, and connection. Activities included:

➤ Bodhrán Making with Paul Cassidy – pupils explored rhythm and tradition through this iconic Irish instrument.

➤ Tai Chi sessions led by Confucius Tutors – offering a moment of calm and cultural insight.

➤ Dumpling Making – a fun and tasty dive into global cuisine.

➤ Global Fruits Exploration – learning and tasting about fruits from around the world and their origins.

➤ Food Sampling Stations – a delicious journey through international flavours.

➤ Good Relations Workshops – delivered in conjunction with TIDES, fostering understanding and dialogue.

➤ Recognising the Good Friday Agreement – a reflective session led by TIDES and Youthscape+ highlighting its significance in promoting peace and inclusion.

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:

Online Training Delivery

The shift to online training delivery, prompted by the pandemic, has helped remove barriers to participation and improved access for staff and students. This format has enhanced social inclusion and promoted equality and good relations by addressing challenges such as:

- Cost and availability of transport
- Time constraints and caring responsibilities
- Accessibility needs
- Social anxiety and confidence in large face-to-face settings

Section 75 Impact:

This approach supports individuals across multiple categories, including disability, dependants, gender, and age, by making training more flexible, inclusive, and accessible.

Cedar Foundation Neurodiversity Sessions – delivered online across campus

South West College in collaboration with our Social Inclusion Department partnered with the Cedar Foundation to deliver several online lunchtime targeted neurodiversity awareness sessions as part of our wider Equality and Inclusion strategy. These sessions were designed to increase understanding of neurodivergent conditions, including autism, ADHD, and other cognitive differences, and to equip staff with

practical strategies to support neurodivergent individuals in both educational and workplace settings.

Our objective:

- Increase awareness and understanding of neurodiversity
- Promote inclusive practices and examples of reasonable adjustments
- Build staff confidence in supporting neurodivergent students and colleagues
- Align with Section 75 duties, particularly in relation to disability, age, and gender

Outcomes and Impact:

First session 48 attended, 102 attended the second sessions with 147 people attended three training session.

- Skills and Knowledge Gained: Staff engaged well with the lunchtime sessions proved successful and engaging, reported a significant increase in their understanding of neurodiversity and felt more confident in applying inclusive strategies in their roles.
- Behavioural Change: Participants felt they could adapted their communication styles and teaching approaches to better support neurodivergent learners.

Mandatory Equality Training

All new and current staff attend a mandatory Equality Training Session facilitated by the College's Equality Officer. The session covers:

- Section 75 duties and legal responsibilities
- Equality, diversity, and inclusive language
- The role of staff in fostering an inclusive learning and working environment

Impact:

The training has been positively received, increasing awareness and understanding among staff reinforcing the College's commitment to promoting accessibility and inclusion.

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**:

Click or tap here to enter text.

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:

0

Section 3: Looking Forward

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

The Scheme is due for reviewed in 2026

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)*

Appendix 1

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

PART A

☐ 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

1. Number of action measures for this **reporting period** that have been:

No	ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Responsibility	Update
DAP1	The Colleges will endeavour to influence the Department for the Economy to ensure participation of disabled people on the Governing Body of the Colleges.	Ongoing and when vacancies arise.	Governing Body will include members with disabilities.	Chief Executive and Governing Body of College	The College has continued to support this action by working with the Department for the Economy during recruitment campaigns. Efforts have focused on encouraging individuals with disabilities to apply for board member positions.
DAP2	Continue to encourage the participation of disabled individuals on College committees, as student representatives on the Governing Body, and in groups across the Colleges.	Reviewed annually Year 1 – Year 5.	Membership of committees and groups reflects participation of individuals with disabilities.	Senior Management Team Chairpersons of committees Equality Working Group	Students and staff with disabilities, as well as advocates for disability inclusion, continue to actively contribute to a variety of College committees, with notable involvement in the Equality Working Group. The Disability Advisory Group has played a key role in consultation processes for the Erne Campus. Additionally, Good Relations sessions have been delivered to College groups on demand, supporting inclusive engagement and fostering a culture of respect and understanding.

PART B

No	ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Responsibility	Update
DAP3	Encourage students with disabilities to participate more fully in all aspects of College life.	Annually as part of induction and ongoing throughout the year. Year 1 – Year 5.	Increased participation of students with disabilities in: • Student focus groups • Student surveys • Student Union membership	Student Services Manager Student Engagement Officers	The College's Equality and Autism Working Group continues to drive and promotion inclusion.
DAP4	Increase awareness and understanding of the specific barriers experienced by people with disabilities.	Ongoing (Y1 – 5Years)	Improved awareness and understanding among staff and students of the challenges faced by people with disabilities.	HR / Equality Team Members, Student Engagement Officers, External Training Facilitators, Charitable Organisations.	Through strengthened engagement with organisations such as the Cedar Foundation and training delivered by Inclusion Works, staff awareness of disability-related barriers has significantly increased. Equality & Diversity sessions have been delivered to staff and students to further raise awareness. Additionally, corporate online modules including Equality & Diversity and SENDO have supported ongoing learning and understanding of the issues faced by disabled individuals.
DAP5	Promote the use of the AccessAble website to encourage participation and informed decision-making	Annually and on-going Year 1 – Year 5.	Benchmark usage of AccessAble webpage.	Members of Marketing and Communications Team	An information session delivered to staff and students has significantly increased awareness of the AccessAble webpage. Usage statistics for the last reporting period (ending 31st March) showed a

PART B

No	ACTION MEASURES	Timescales	Performance indicators / intended outcome	Responsibility	Update
	by prospective students with disabilities.				notable rise in page visits related to accessing College information. Up-to-date accessibility audits were completed for SWC campuses in January 2025, with the Workhouse, Enniskillen completed in March 2025.