**SERC (South Eastern Regional College)**

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# **Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties**

# **Annual Progress Report 23/24**

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| * Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme
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| * Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan
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| 5Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at: | Please insert link or details here<https://www.serc.ac.uk/public-information/equality> |
| **Signature:** |  |

**Contact details:**

 **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 2023 and March 2024**

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

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| **1** |  | **In 2023-24, 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.*** |
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| Throughout the reporting period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024, SERC continued to promote equality of opportunity and good relations internally and externally for staff and students.   A number of campaigns and course content for students took place throughout the college which were aimed at creating and improving awareness and demonstrating the colleges commitment to promoting Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations.  The Equality and Good Relations App is accessible for staff and students to embed Equality and Cultural Diversity and to aid the sharing of best practice. The App offers staff and students the opportunity to send proposed agenda items for discussion at the Internal Working Group meetings.  **Internal Equality Working Group** The Internal Equality Working group continues to meet four times per year and is represented with approximately 30 staff from various roles throughout the college along with student representation and includes 4 staff who joined following an expression of interest. Each year the group representation is reviewed by the Chair of the group and Equality Officer. The group continues to keep barriers to education as an agenda item and addresses issues which may be placing students at a detriment to their education and financial implications due to the cost of living. Areas that the group discussed included, the provision of free school meals and breakfasts in the main campuses which were funded by the Department of Economy, support on availing of the Wallace fund for students worried about their families, supporting students with additional needs, reviewing and training customer staff on the loop system to help deal with those with hearing difficulties, consideration for quiet spaces during college open days and enrolment days with perhaps the concept of a buddy system and curriculum review in relation to staff progressing from level 2 to level 3 in some subjects. The group agreed on an inclusion and diversity calendar and identified fifteen awareness days to be recognised during the year with articles placed on the equality and good relations app and the intranet sites.**AccessAble**SERC continues to avail of AccessAble who provide accessible information on SERC’s facilities which are available for visitors, staff, and students. The site is promoted at open evenings, on the external website and the staff intranet site. During the reporting period there were a total of 846 views on the site with 577 Users availing of the App.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. During the reporting period changes identified include a new disabled toilet in Castle House, a new disability lift in the Bangor Sports Hall and a new disability toilet in the Bangor campus and new toilet block in the Holywood campus. Campuses will be surveyed on the next scheduled visit and the SERC website will be updated.**Disability Confident Scheme**The College gained Level 1 and Level 2 of the Disability Confident Committed Scheme in April 2022 and is valid for 3 years and continues to promote the scheme.  **Student enrolment**Student enrolment as at the 31 March 2024 was 21,825 students on full time and part time, HE and FE courses.The College uses additional fee income to financially support those students from the lowest income groups.  In 2023/24 Higher Education students, in receipt of the full maintenance grant or student support grant from Student Finance NI, and who had satisfactory attendance, were eligible for an HE Access Bursary payment and this was paid in May 24. The payment was 10% of the student’s full course fee.  In 2022/23 reporting period the amount released in bursary payments was £22,383 and in 23/24 reporting period the total amounted to £21,850.00. Students from deprivation quintiles 1 & 2: in 23/24 to 31 March 2024 for all SERC this was 32% and for HE it was 26%. The previous reporting period for all SERC was 30% and for HE 27%.The percentage of Adult Learners (aged 25+) who come from deprivation quintiles 1 & 2 in 23/24:  for all SERC this was 30% and for HE it was 26%.The percentage of students who are young protestant males (20 years and below): for all of SERC in 23/24 this was 11% and for Higher Education 7%.**International and local opportunities for students**The UK Government’s Turing Scheme is a unique global programme for students studying, working, and living abroad, offering once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for personal and professional development for students across the world. This scheme provides fully funded opportunities for SERC students to travel anywhere in the world. There is a particular emphasis on those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities to avail of the scheme. From September 2023, 87 students 19 accompanying staff undertook work placements in Spain, Malta, Tenerife, and South Africa to improve their technical and transversal skills and make a positive impact on their career prospects.These opportunities were open to all SERC students regardless of their background or ability and a transparent recruitment and selection process was applied to ensure equality of opportunity. Of the 87 students involved, 30 did not hold a passport and applied for their first passport. It was evident that these students had not experienced international travel before with some stating that it was never an option for them. Twenty Culinary Arts and Travel & Tourism students travelled to the Stellenbosch region of Cape Town in South Africa on two-week work experience and cultural visit designed to improve their professional cookery and tourism skills. Twelve students from Level 3 Diploma in Professional Cookery and 8 Level 3 Diploma Travel & Tourism students not only experienced the unique South African culture but also attended guest lectures, demonstrations, work shadowing professional chefs and tourism businesses and participated in joint projects with the students from Boland College, Cape Town.Twenty-three students from Level 3 National Extended Diploma in Sport (10), Level 3 National Extended Diploma Animal Management (8) and Level 3 Extended Diploma in Applied Science (5) participated in a volunteering placement in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Sport students worked alongside volunteers and charitable organisations with students from disadvantaged backgrounds developing coaching sessions and managing mini tournaments. Animal Management and Science students lived and worked in Sibuya.Ten students from LJMU BSc Hons Business Management course participated in their first student mobility project working in international business in Malaga, Spain, to develop global business awareness, improve critical employability skills and build commercial awareness by applying knowledge gained in the classroom to a real global business environment.Ten Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Patisserie and Confectionary students worked with small bakery owners in Malaga, Spain widening their knowledge and technical skills, understanding new bakes, processes and ingredients as well as improving their language, cultural and employability skills. Seven students from Level 3 National Extended Diploma in Construction worked alongside Maltese government engineers, quantity surveyors and architects. They had the opportunity to learn about local construction projects, materials used, planning processes and how procedures differ from UK standards, and they also had the chance to learn a little about the history of the island and participate in various cultural activities.Seven Level 3 Extended Diploma in IT students worked with IT professionals in Malta applying their college-based knowledge to real life situations. The students improved their skills in C# Programming (Windows Forms, Unity Game Scripts, Console Apps), Python (Basics), Visual Basic (Basics), C for Arduino (IoT), HTML and CSS for Web Design.SERC have been involved in the delivery of DfE Skill Up Flexible Skills Fund Programme. Skill Up offers fully funded training to those over 18 who reside or have indefinite leave to remain in NI. Over 800 individuals have availed of these courses and been upskilled. Key areas where courses have been delivered were Green Technologies, Digital, Leadership & Management, Motor Vehicle and Manufacturing.SERC has the widest range of training courses for Industry in the FE Sector. These address the anticipated skills deficits in the priority skills areas. This includes 132 fully accredited courses currently available from Level 2 – Level 7. **College collaborations and visits** SERC was awarded funding through the British Council Going Global Partnership Programme to support the implementation of a Quality Assurance Framework tailored to the needs of the Moroccan Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector.SERC hosted 8 visitors from Morocco for a week-long study visit as part of the project which seen the college work collaboratively with Ministry of Economic Integration, Small Business, Employment & Skills, Office of Vocational Training & Employment Promotion (OFPPT) and Institutes of Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Training (IFMEREE) in Morocco.   The College provided practical support to help them engage in quality assurance and self-evaluation processes, reflect on their own experience, and implement a pilot programme which enhanced the effective engagement of women and marginalised groups with constructive employer engagement, career guidance and the development of soft skills.As part of the British Council Going Global Partnerships, the Learning Academy are involved in a programme to support soft skills development with Mozambique partner College’s students through piloting/developing the implementation of PBL as a teaching methodology.  Training/mentoring was delivered online over 6 sessions and colleagues from the Mozambique Colleges will visit SERC in April 2024Two staff visited Toyama KOSEN, Toyama Minami High School, and Toyama Kamitaira Elementary School to learn about their entrepreneurial and real-world learning, and to share details of SERC’s activities through the Entrepreneurs Club and Project-Based Learning. The SERC representatives also connected with Toyama University and the University of International Studies in Toyama.   SERC hosted a delegation from the National Institute of Technology (NIT) in Toyama, Japan for a week-long visit to the College. The five visitors were here to learn about the work of the Enterprise and Entrepreneurship team, and particularly their work around business start-ups.  The visit follows successful exchanges of staff and students during the past year, funded by the Daiwa Foundation and The Great British Sasakawa Foundation.The trip to Toyama was funded by the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, which seeks to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between the UK and Japan. Learning Academy staff and Mentors provided one-to-one support for Lahore Garrison University staff to integrate into SERC’s culture, build relationships and develop College best practice pedagogical approaches.  Lahore Garrison University has partnered with SERC to plan and pilot a programme of support for teachers coming to SERC from outside of the UK. The programme will be shaped and informed by their experience and a case study written with the staff looking at the evidence-based impact. A group of staff from Barnsley College, in South Yorkshire, visited SERC as part of the continuing, productive relationship between the two institutions. The group spent time with the foundation skills academy, discussing the benefits of Project Based Learning (PBL) and sharing best practice in the Lisburn campus and in SERC’s Newcastle Campus, where they met Skills for Life and Work students who are completing the joint Duke of Edinburgh/Gaisce Award. The visitors joined students and staff for a trip to Tollymore Forest Park and enjoyed sharing their experience of developing teamwork, problem-solving and resilience. |
| **Training Opportunities for staff** The Academic Staff Development in August 2023 theme was ‘ElevatEd – Empowering Educators’ delivered across 3 campuses and 303 staff attended sessions including mandatory training along with opportunities to choose from various workshops supporting personal and professional development.Corporate Staff Development in January 2024 theme was ‘ADAPT; Developing Skills for a Changing World’.  Delivery was face-to-face over 2 campuses with two hundred staff attending 3 strands General Skills, Digital Skills, and Wellbeing strand. 54% of staff that attended submitted Evaluations, providing an overall rating of 4.2 out of 5 when asked how beneficial they found the Event.   SERC and Forth Valley College (FVC) Scotland’s long-standing relationship continues, with ongoing collaboration activities planned for 23/24.Along with HR, the Learning Academy delivered a ‘Managing hybrid working and diverse teams’ session to managers as part of our Leading @ SERC programme.  Thirty-three managers attended the online session with a follow up face-to-face ‘Connected Leaders Meet’ (Peer support event) to enable managers to get together to give and gain support around the challenges of managing diverse teams. To enable staff to create accessible resources and utilise assistive technologies the Learning Academy delivered twenty-eight Accessibility training workshops to three hundred and eighteen staff (via Academic Staff Development, Corporate Staff Development, Short Courses and scheduled online sessions). Additionally, a dedicated SharePoint page was created and included in the Learning Academy Team site containing a range of resources for staff to access at any time.  Workshops on “Accessibility” and “Differentiation & Integration” were also delivered to this year's CIT/PGCE(FE) candidates, focusing on inclusive classrooms, and supporting students with additional needs The Learning Academy staff and Pedagogy Mentors were upskilled in ‘Neurodiversity’ by a colleague from the Enterprise & Entrepreneurship team who has developed an OCNNI Level 3 Award in Neurodiversity in the Workplace.   In addition, this neurodiversity workshop was delivered to corporate staff during Staff Development with thirty-two staff attending. The Learning Academy Team also attended online training sessions and workshops delivered as part of “Neurodiversity Celebration Week” and the links were sent out to staff and recording placed on the Equality and Diversity App. In continued response to the growing LGBTQIA+ community within SERC, diversity training was again delivered to raise awareness, inform, and sensitively support this diversity amongst staff and students.  Seventeen staff attended the online session delivered by Cara Friend with resources shared in the Equality App for those who were unable to attend.**Careers services**Following the success of similar events in May 23 at Ards and Lisburn Campuses, SERC Careers Service organised Community Support Organisation Events at Newtownards, Downpatrick, and Lisburn in February 2024. These events were aimed at students who were not planning on progressing to another course within SERC, and their parents/guardians were also invited to attend. The event timings were moved to February to coincide with the students preparing for transition planning and provided an opportunity for the students and their parents/guardians to speak with the organisations about support available in their communities for students with a disability, or long-term health related condition. Students and parents were able to find out about training, education, and employment support in the community, including transport and in work support available through Workable and Access to Work programmes. Organisations in attendance included DfE Careers, Cedar Foundation, Clanrye Group, Disability Action, Neurodiversity UK, Now Group, USEL, Orchard Ville, Mencap and YMCA. During 23-24, the Careers team delivered information sessions for Clanrye, SEHSCT HOPE Service Teams, Beechlawn Special School, Include Youth, and Grooms port AEP. The team also participated in Ards Social Supermarket events, Ballynahinch and Downpatrick Youth Support Events, a SEHCT Menopause information event, LCCI Jobs Fairs and ANDBC Jobs Fairs at Bangor Aurora and Blair Mayne Leisure Centre.During 23-24, engagement with local post-primary schools included FE and HE talks at a range of schools, as well as information stands at career events including LECALE Careers Conventions, Dromore High school Careers Fair, St Genevieve’s Careers Convention, Wellington School Careers Fair, Ashfield Boys Careers Fair, and St Columbanus Apprenticeships Fair. The careers team also participated in mock interview days at Glenola Collegiate School, St Colm’s Lisburn and Laurelhill College. Onsite-Insight events were held at Bangor, Lisburn, and Downpatrick campuses, which enhanced links with career teachers in local post-primary schools and provided an update on SERC’s post-16 provision. As a result of these events, a briefing was then delivered to career teachers in the ND ALC updating them on options at SERC, and two campus visits were also organised for 20 Yr14 pupils from Forthill Integrated College (Lisburn Campus HE focused) and 70 year 12 pupils from Saintfield High School (Downpatrick FE focused). The campus tours gave prospective pupils and their teachers an opportunity to see the college facilities and speak with course teams and received excellent feedback. During 23-24, in addition to ongoing 1-1 career appointments, the Careers team have also visited full time and part time classes across the College and held a series of career pop-ups, to reach out to as many students as possible. This activity has enabled the team to promote the Careers Service and increase members joining the Online Careers Hub. Class sessions have included Career Induction talks, progression options after L1, L2 and L3 courses, HE progression within SERC, UCAS and personal statements, graduate options, industry specific career opportunities, preparing for work placements, CV Building, Job Searching, Interview Skills, mock job interviews, and mock university interviews. **Student Health and Wellbeing**The Student Union successfully hosted Freshers and Refreshers fairs on 4 campuses this year with 1122 i.e. 5% of students attending Freshers and 906 i.e. 4.15% of students attending Refreshers. One of the aims of these fairs was to have local charities that help support students from liberation groups attend the fair. The fair allowed for students to learn about and connect with these charities. These charities included Rainbow Project, Women’s Aid and AccessAble. These charities have also come into the college throughout the year to provide training and facilitate stalls on campus.

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| **SERC’s recognition and participation of recognised inclusion and diversity days/months in the 2023/24 academic year**

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| **Awareness Days/Months** |  **Articles on staff and student intranets raising awareness and activities**  |
| **Suicide Awareness Day** **10th of September 2023**  | Awareness article on the Equality and Good Relations and Mind Yourself Apps and Student Union Hub and intranet sitesSignposting internal and external providers |
| **International Day of Sign Languages****23rd of September 2023** | Awareness article on the Equality and Good Relations App and staff intranet siteSignposting for external providers |
| **Mental Health Awareness Day****10th of October 2023** | Awareness article on the Equality and Good Relations and Mind Yourself Apps and Student Union Hub and staff intranet sitesStaff events:* Coffee and connect on campuses and online via MS teams
* Mental Health online quiz
* Breathwork and relaxation session
* Launch of Inspire Wellbeing new online hub
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| **World Menopause Awareness Day****18th of October 2023** | Awareness article on the Equality and Good Relations and Mind Yourself Apps and staff intranet siteInformation and support via the Mind Yourself newsletter, online podcast links, Money, and Pension service session to advise how your pension is affected if you leave due to menopause, FE Sector Menopause for all awareness session, Menopause evening event in the Downpatrick campus with guest speakers hosted by South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. |
| **ADHD Awareness month****October 2023** | Awareness article on the Equality and Good Relations App and staff intranet site |
| **International Men’s Day****29th of November 2023** | Awareness article on the Equality and Good Relations App and staff intranet siteThe SU officers took part in Movember. SU volunteers helped raise money and awareness for men’s health issues throughout the month. This ended with a men health event at the end of the month on the four main SERC campuses with 77 students getting involved. |
| **International Person with Disability Awareness Day****3rd of December 2023** | Awareness article on the Equality and Good Relations App and staff intranet site |
| **International Women’s Day****8th of March 2024** | Awareness article on the Equality and Good Relations and Mind Yourself Apps and Student Union Hub and intranet sitesAs part of International Women’s Day, the Women’s’ Officer in Bangor set up a stall to promote the day.  |
| **Neurodiversity week****18th-24th March 2024** | Awareness article on the Equality and Good Relations App and staff intranetTwenty-four events were held online and with recordings of sessions available afterwards. |
| **Sexual Health Week****February 2024** | As part of Sexual Health Week, the SU ran stalls on all campuses promoting health relationships with over 200 students visiting the stalls. The SU encouraged students to put their relationship green flags on the board as well as promoting active consent materials.   |

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| **SOP’s and Policies** |

In the reporting period 3 new/revised policies have been approved and placed on the Colleges learning engine for staff to access which included Little SERC’s Fees Policy, SERC Voluntary Severance Scheme and Fees policy for 24/25. Three policies were screened during the reporting period by the FE Sector group, Parental leave, Maternity leave, and FE Sector Voluntary Severance Scheme.**Fundraising and volunteering**Staff Associations in conjunction with the Mind Yourself Campaign entered relay teams in the Belfast Marathon in May 2023 and £1706.00 was raised for the Marie Curie Charity to help them continue to provide care and support for people living with terminal illness.Level 3 beauty students from SERC’s Lisburn campus hosted a beauty event and raised £235.89 for Dementia NI and Level 2 hair and media make-up ran a “donate what you can” event and it raised £100.00 in aid of Marie Curie.First year students studying Level 3 Uniformed Protective Services at SERC Bangor campus volunteered at the Balmoral Show by carrying out successful bucket collections for Cancer Focus NI to raise vital funds to help reduce the impact of cancer on local people’s lives.At the Balmoral show the students also supervised a fundraising activity for children with charity’s sponsor, Northstone Materials. Some students helped at the Cancer Focus NI health information stand, speaking with customers about the benefits of quitting smoking and the importance of sun protection. Three students returned on Saturday, 13 May to work at the Food NI stand.  The students accrued hours for Duke of Edinburgh Awards and Volunteer Now Impact Awards. In conjunction with Mind Yourself Campaign beauty students in Bangor, Downpatrick and Lisburn held pampering days and staff donated dry goods for local food banks.Level 3 hairdressing students from the Colleges Bangor campus set up a hairdressing stand with raffle prizes donated by local businesses in Bloomfield Shopping Centre, Bangor and raised £205.64 for K9 Search and Rescue NI.SERC A Level students in Bangor Campus donated 80 gift bags and parcels to local charities as well as to individual people living in the Bangor community.  These gifts went to clients of Women’s Aid Federation NI, the lead voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland addressing domestic abuse and providing services for women and children, and to AGENDA (AGE North Down and Ards), which is part of AGE NI, Northern Ireland's largest charity for older people. The gifts were tailored to each charity, with packages designed for women, teenagers and children going to Women’s Aid and packages designed for older men and women going to AGENDA. Gifts were also given to people within the local Bangor community who live on their own. Hospitality and Culinary Arts students and staff prepared 100 frozen meals for the Bangor Foodbank and Community Support (BFCS) who will give to those who would otherwise not have anything to eat on Christmas day or in the hard few weeks after Christmas.**SERC achievements** SERC won training provider of the Year at the Prestigious Chartered Management Institute (CMI) Presidents Awards in November 2023.SERC was a finalist in the CIPD awards for Impactful Health and Wellbeing at Work award.The Entrepreneur Club, ran by the Enterprise, Entrepreneurship & Environment team at SERC, is dedicated to supporting students in developing enterprising and entrepreneurial skills. The club won a Silver Pearson Teaching Award for FE Team of the Year in November 2023. OCN Learning Endeavour Awards 2023 Highly Commended Advancing Learning Through Innovation (Dream Big Programme Newcastle)   OCN Highly Commended Further Education Learner of the Year (Adrian Stott Dream Big Participant)   OCN Learning Endeavour Awards 2023 Highly Commended Inspiring Tutor/Teacher of the Year (Lizzie Buick). Going into the 2024 OCN Awards, three students from the Be Your Own Boss Downpatrick course have been nominated for FE Learners of the Year.  In April 2023 staff and students were recognised and awarded recognition for their achievements following nominations from colleagues and students in the Colleges Excellence Awards which was hosted over 3 evenings in the Bangor, Downpatrick, and Lisburn campuses. |
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| **2** | Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2023-24 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*). |
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| **Action Plans - Outcome/Impact on Individuals**   |
| **Monitor, Review & utilise annual workforce & student data to inform policy development and marketing.** **Annual Monitoring Return (Workforce)** The Annual Monitoring Return was completed for the period 01/01/2023 until 01/01/2024 and was submitted to the Equality Commission.  As a comparator to the previous submission there was no significant change with the makeup of male and females with community background.**Student enrolment** Student enrolment as at the 31 March 2024 was 21,825 students on full time and part time, HE and FE courses. |
| **Further embed equality and diversity into the College & Curriculum through awareness raising & promotion.**On the Equality and Good Relations App there is a section where staff and students can send proposed items for the agenda to be discussed at the Internal Working Group. The Students Union oversaw the election of a strong cohort of Liberation officers for the 23/24 academic year with 47 students being nominated with 11 of the 17 officers being successfully elected to liberation roles. Each campus’ liberation roles were led by an Equality and Diversity Officer. There were also specific officers whose role was to focus on LGBTQIA, ethnic minorities, Trans, Women’s, and Disabled issues on campus. These officer teams were involved with informing and supporting the needs of liberation groups on each SERC campus. These officers also helped create and support a number of campaigns and events to raise awareness of the needs of students that are in the given liberation group.  The Neurodivergent Support Club was set up by the Bangor Disability Officer with 5 students involved. They identified the need for students to share their experiences and make connections outside of their class. This peer led model has also allowed for students to raise awareness of student needs to the Equality & Diversity Officer.  Student Union Officers continued to run the International Students’ Club for SERC students from across the world to meet in a safe space to share their experiences and create connections across the college. During the reporting period, the Disability Officer in Lisburn identified the need for a safe space for Disabled students to share their experiences and make connections outside of their class. This peer led model also allows for students to raise awareness of local support services. The Pride Alliance group continued in Ards, Bangor, and Lisburn campuses during the reporting period. This is a club for students that self-identify as being in the LGBTQIA community. It was created to be a place for students to come together to provide peer and community support, training, and signpost to resources for LGBTQIA students and allies across SERC. The Pride Alliance group has grown to Ards this year with plans to set up an on-campus Pride Alliance in Downpatrick. The chairs of the Alliance have also used their team’s hub to share support materials and events organised by internal and external groups.  The International Department ran an event for students to come together from international backgrounds at Lisburn and Bangor campuses in March 2024 and students were encouraged to dress in clothing that represented their international background, although it wasn’t mandatory.Three new mandatory modules to increase staff awareness have been developed and these will be launched to staff in the next reporting period:* Dignity and Respect at work;
* Supporting staff with their mental health; and
* Screening for policy holders.
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| **Recruit a diverse student population.** SERC has created a reactive and pro-active marketing and communications strategy and plan for the period of 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024, with the main objective of recruiting a diverse student population by:* Continuing to build awareness of SERC, its offering and student experience through online and social channels (both organic and paid).
* Driving traffic to the SERC website by developing and implementing organic and paid ads.
* Issuing regular ezines to post-primary schools, including special schools, to promote SERC courses, careers talks and open evenings.
* Issuing quarterly ezines to external stakeholders.
* Organising a successful Graduation at the Waterfront Hall (September 2023) with around 1,200 guests.
* Organising Open Evenings at certain times of the year to a diverse demographic which included advertising and PR campaigns with a combination of outdoor, radio, print, digital, social media, and PR for events in:
	+ Adult Education Open Evening – June 2023
	+ Enrolment Days (both Full-time and part-time)- August 2023
	+ Full-time Open Evening- March 2024.
* Ran advertorials which have included reference to inclusivity of campuses, Learning Support services on all campuses, and the SERC partnership with AccessAble to share information about campus accessibility.
* Working with external agencies such as local government, jobcentres etc to promote the open evenings.
* As part of NI Apprenticeship Week targeted advertising was undertaken to increase the awareness of ‘Have A Go’ Sessions’ which invited a diverse audience to come in and have a go at some demos. Advertising included PR, Digital, social as well as working collaboratively with the Training Organisation.
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| **Further develop student support mechanisms to reduce barriers to education and learning.** The Internal Equality Working group have continued to keep barriers to education as an ongoing item on the agenda at meetings.As outlined previously, Students Union have appointed Liberation Officers, clubs and societies, information, and training to include all students across the college.The Learning Support Team at SERC provides support, help and guidance to students with additional needs relating to a disability, learning difficulty or long-term medical condition. During academic year 23/24, the team provided support to over 900 students which was tailored to meet the individual needs of the student. The type of support provided included support from a Learning Support Assistant either on a one to one or classroom support basis; the provision of Learning Support ‘drop in’ hubs; the provision of additional technology such as a laptop, iPad, or specialist software; the provision of physical resources such as adjustable height desk or orthopaedic chair; a sign language interpreter. In addition, SERC engaged with other external agencies where appropriate to avail of specialist support provision for students with disabilities which involved targeted learning support, as well as mentoring and skills development to assist in building independent learning skills.The Learning Support Team works closely with students, tutors, and the examinations team to ensure that access arrangements are in place where appropriate. Examples of the type of arrangements provided during the 23/24 academic year included arranging technological support such as reader pens or computers, facilitating extra time and arranging for modified examination papers to be available, such as with larger fonts or printed on coloured paper. Funded by the Department for the Economy, Learner Welfare rolled out a free meal welfare initiative to students during January – March 2024. During this time, students were provided with a free hot meal and drink three days per week, and a number of fresh chilled meals were also made available for students to take home. Additionally, dry food packs were provided for students in particular need. As part of the initiative, students were invited to complete a short online training module to remind them of the various welfare and support services available to them at SERC. This was further reinforced by the provision of a member of staff from one of the SERC student support services (Student Finance, Students’ Union, Learning Support, Careers, Student Carers) being available during lunch times to informally talk to students and encourage them to engage with the relevant support services. During this initiative, over 25,000 meals were provided, and 1655 i.e. 7% of students completed the training module. Students reported that this initiative supported them through a period of financial difficulty, helped them to be more motivated to attend college, eat better, have more energy and increased concentration levels.SERC delivered 2 pilots for the DfE funded programme, Ignite Your Skills which had three strands, Renew, Recognise and Return. The programme was targeted at the over 40’s age group. SERC upskilled 45 individuals to ensure job mobility and increase career opportunities. Nineteen individuals were engaged on the recognise strand, this enabled them to gain an experienced worker pathway qualification or a Professional Recognition Award at levels 4 - 7. Twenty-Four individuals were recruited onto the return strand. SERC collaborated with Lagan Marine Training, all participants had a 1-week intensive training course in STCW and a 1:1 session perfecting CV’s and Interview Skills. All twenty-four participants had interviews scheduled with Stena Line, Local fishing vessels and wind farms to take place in April 2024. SERC have continued to develop their strategic partnership with Institute of Export and International Trade (EOI & IT) SERC have submitted a proposal in collaboration with IOE to DfE for a Trade and Export Pathway Programme. This would offer training, webinars, workshops and 1:1 mentoring for business to support them on their export journey.SERC secured funding of £10,000 from Public Health NI, to implement a new project which will address the needs of 220 student carers across the college. These students provide many forms of care to family members, friends and loved ones, ranging from helping with everyday tasks to providing round-the-clock care for those with complex conditions.As demonstrated through student feedback, it was identified that the carers project would provide facilities, resources, and mental health and wellbeing aids to support the student carers, helping them to relax, reach their full potential and build peer support relationships. The carers project will include the following aspects across all campuses:* A quiet wellbeing space designed specifically for student carers to relax and meet with other carers, including access to massage chairs, weighted blankets, sensory relaxation tools such as light and sound therapy, and headphones and iPads to enable peaceful meditation
* Training for volunteers to become wellbeing instructors. Six-to-8-week programmes will be implemented for student carers, teaching them about wellbeing support and training methods to enjoy a positive work/life balance. The training will help student carers relax, develop strength and endurance, and find an outlet which will enable them to build resilience outside the College
* The development of an online peer support group tool for student carers, which will provide advice on services to support them
* The development of an online solution/support group for student carers to support their wellbeing and learn resilience coping techniques
* The creation of promotional items which will raise the awareness of student carers across the college community and encourage more carers to step forward.

SERC have also formed a strategic partnership with Forth Valley College in relation to Comp Ex training. SERC have become a satellite centre for Comp Ex delivery and training courses will formally launch in May 2024.With the help of Ards and North Down Borough Council’s Economic Development Department, the Female Leadership program delivered by SERC over six weeks in November 2023. Participants benefited from five hours one to one mentoring – face to face or online, to address business and individual needs and challenges, and online tutoring towards achieving a Chartered Management Institute (CMI) qualification at level 3, level 4, or Level 7. The Female Leadership program has been designed to help address many of the barriers that women must overcome to pursue their ambitions in leadership and management roles. The course structure aims to minimize disruption to day-to-day business and home commitments, whilst giving local women the opportunity to drive their career progression for those leadership and management roles that will help drive our local economy. The All-Ireland Scholarships Scheme was funded by JP McManus, which provides financial support to high achieving students from low-income households. The Scholarships offer students financial support of £5,500 per annum for the duration of their undergraduate degree course. Six Scholarships were available to the top Level 3 Extended Diploma students with one being awarded in each of the six Further Education Colleges. In September 2024, is Enterprise Fortnight, which is in the induction period, 2593 students i.e. 11% were challenged to develop enterprising and innovative solutions to real world challenges with 696 projects, presented over 3 days with 32 external stakeholders engaging. Full time students from all curriculum areas and disciplines took part in this Project Based Learning approach which allows them to develop transversal skills, apply their learning to real world situations, interact with external industry experts and get to know others in their class.  Students are given a real-world challenge to solve which are based around the SERC themes of sustainability, healthy living, and learning.  Over a short period of time, they develop their solutions and go through the 12 step PBL model which includes presenting their solutions at the College Enterprise Expos. Industry experts, local entrepreneurs, members of the council and lecturers from all areas are invited to attend these expos as judges to listen to the students pitch their ideas and give them scores and invaluable feedback.  Ten finalists are then chosen from across all campuses to compete in a Dragon’s Den Style final to pitch to industry experts.   Collaborative project between LCCC, SERC, Keep NI Beautiful, Sew Ready and local Lisburn Charity shops (British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research, Cancer Focus, NI Hospice, Action Cancer). Projects carried out in the lead up to celebration event held at SERC Lisburn campus. The Dream Big programmes aimed to support people currently out of work to develop skills, identify their talents, and grow in confidence. It was also ideal for anyone who had been out of education for a long time to ease them back into learning and put them on track for a new career.     In Bangor 10 students, and 9 in Lisburn campus participated in the Big Dream programmes aimed to support people currently out of work to develop skills, identify their talents, and grow in confidence and for those out of education a long time to get back into learning and help get them on track for a new career. Students completed Level 2 Innovation and Enterprise in Practice Qualification and students felt the course helped them to identify and develop a new business idea.  Ongoing support is being provided to three students from the course in applying for funding applications.   Be Your Own Boss fully funded course through Neighbourhood Renewable Fund – partnership between Co Down Rural Community Network, the Men’s Shed and local Entrepreneurs.  This course is aimed at those out of work or education in the Ballymote area of Downpatrick. Many students on this course have additional needs and so a teaching team had been put in place to meet the needs of individuals. There was a higher staff to student ratio than average which meant each student could be given one to one support during class and with their business idea.   Twelve students achieved a Level 2 qualification in Innovation and Enterprise in Transversal skills.Step Up to Enterprise Programme designed to support the economically inactive to access education or employment.  Funded under the UK Governments’ New Deal for Northern Ireland Initiative, students gained a Level 2 qualification in Innovation and Enterprise in Practice.  This course was implemented to accommodate for the high demand of the Be Your Own Boss course running at the same time. Students who were not eligible for the BYOB course were allocated to Step Up – ensuring anyone who applied were given an opportunity.   Nine students achieved the Level 2 Innovation and Enterprise in Practice qualification. Enterprise Accelerator was created as a follow-on course for the Be Your Own Boss and Step Up to Enterprise students in Downpatrick as the team identified a need for a follow-on course to further support students in developing their business and making connections. **Supporting staff and student mental health overall wellbeing**In conjunction with the Mental Health Charter commissioned by the Equality Commission, SERC remains committed to employee’s mental health and overall wellbeing through the Mind Yourself programme which delivers a vast range of activities and information sessions to support staff’s wellbeing through the monthly newsletter along with the online App.SERC provides health and wellbeing support to staff and students events run in conjunction with health and wellbeing days with SU and HR collaborating on events on recognised mental health days as outlined earlier in the report.The Wellbeing Hub is part of the Student Union’s online hub on MS teams with 2 posts per week to support student wellbeing and there is an average of 350 students visiting the page each week. Throughout the year the posts have included information about groups that provide support for liberation groups. This included Rainbow Project, Women’s Aid, Active Consent & Men’s health awareness. Students Union engaged Action Mental Health who delivered 5 sessions with 74 students which is .33% attending and Ascert delivered drug and alcohol awareness and 106 students attended over the 7 sessions which equates to .48% of students.The College counselling service is provided by Inspire Wellbeing for both staff and students who offer 24/7 counselling service with face-to-face appointments, along with support through their health and wellbeing hub and information points. Time to Talk Day, 2nd of February 2024, theme was “Not too bad”, and staff events included:* Coffee and connect on campus and online
* Men’s café in the Downpatrick campus
* Feel Good Beauty event in the Downpatrick campus along with walk and jog
* Coffee and connect morning in the Newcastle campus
* Online life events and self-care session
* Launch of lean in sessions for wellbeing

 In addition:* 7 existing and 2 new mental health first aiders along with HR staff and campus managers i.e. 21 in total were accredited Mental Health First Aid certificates which is valid for 3 years.
* 6 more staff volunteered to become health and wellbeing champions and has increased support through the campuses
* Mental health awareness module has been devised to assist managers in supporting staff with mental health issues and will be launched in the next reporting period
* Virtual wellbeing week in August 23, 15 sessions with a range of wellbeing support and included yoga, coping with fatigue and burnout, 5 ways to wellbeing, over 50’s health and wellbeing session and Inspire Wellbeing support services session.
* Pilot for Men’s health and wellbeing is being undertaken to raise awareness of men’s health and to support men e.g. Time to talk men’s café and information session with Age NI.
* Staff Associations were established in the Downpatrick, Bangor and Lisburn campuses following feedback from focus groups and these are imperative in supporting social interaction within the college.
* Four teams engaged with Action Mental Health in their delivery of the Mindset programme to support individuals’ personal resilience.
 |
| **Monitor, Review and Update of Disability Action Plan.**Disability Action plan and actions is an agenda item at the FE Sector Equality group meetings. Student Union representatives give student updates at the Internal Equality working group and is kept under review by SERC.Customer Services staff undertook online training in relation to the loop systems in campuses.SERC is in its second year of their contract extension with AccessAble who provide accessible information on SERC’s facilities which are available for visitors, staff, and students. Audits are carried out annually by surveyors to ensure changes are made in compliance with legislation, during the reporting period changes were made on the disability toilets in Castle Buildings in Lisburn, disability lift was installed, and a new disabled toilet was created in the Bangor campus and new toilets were installed in the Holywood campus with a view to be surveyed at the next scheduled visit. |
| **Provide a range of Equality & Diversity training to all staff & students.** Mandatory modules are implemented for all staff to complete online and review every 2/3 years depending on the area and all new starts are required to undertake when commencing employment. During the reporting period Dignity and Respect and Screening for policy holders’ mandatory modules have been devised and will be launched in the next reporting period.Staff have completed a number of mandatory modules in the field of Equality and Good Relations on the Learning Engine from April 23 to March 24. These have included Equality and Diversity – 307 staff i.e. 30.7%, Safeguarding, Care and Welfare – 622 staff i.e. 62.2%, Mental Health Awareness – 655 staff i.e. 65.5%, Accessibility – 354 staff, i.e. 35.4%, 669 staff i.e. 66.9% - supporting equality and good relations.  The previous “SENDO” module was reviewed in November 2023, content was refreshed and renamed to “Supporting Students with additional needs” to ensure content was accurate and current. The Equality and Good Relations App which was is accessible for staff and students with the aim to embed Equality and Good Relations in the organisation and sharing best practice. On the front page of the App there is a section where staff and students can submit proposed items for the Agenda for the Internal Working Group to consider.  |
| **Grow and enhance relations with local community groups**SERC Engagement and Development team coordinate a programme of outreach, partnership and coordinated activities with local community groups and the wider community and voluntary sector across the SERC catchment area.The aim of this programme is to develop a coordinated approach to supporting local people and those who are the most disadvantaged, with a view to engaging them in education pathways to enhance and improve their lives.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity delivered** | **Partners** | **Outcome** |
| The Engagement team have completed a range of outreach work through representation on local community forum, attending community meetings, coffee mornings and building relations with local community leaders | Kilcooley Women’s CentreBallymacash Interagency forumWestwind’s community forumGlen estate community forumRedburn residents’ association.Peninsula healthy living CentreNorth Down Community NetworkSERC are represented at local community level through Interagency forums, facilitated through supporting communities and Co Down Rural Community Network.  | Strong partnerships established with local decision makers across twelve organisations.  |
| Youth Services engagement has taken place to increase engagement and build relations with young people in local communities. | North Down Community Network – DICE Project. | 4 Afterschool’s session held in the Bangor Campus for young people on the DICE project with North Down Community Network. |
| Social supermarkets | Newtownards | Fortnightly drop in hosted by the team at the social supermarket to meet local people and signpost to courses and other support. **Co Down Rural Community Network. Social Supermarket**Ongoing engagement and the strengthening of relationships with Co Down Network has enabled SERC to become a venue to host the Downpatrick Social Work is ongoing finalise the project and we hope to commence in Nov 2024. |
| Community networks | Co Down Rural Community NetworkArds Community NetworkNorth Down Community NetworkSupporting Communities | Regular meetings and partnership work take place across the four main community networks in the SERC Catchment. |
| Ards Anti-Poverty Forum | Ards Community Network | The Head of Engagement and Development sits on the Ards Anti-Poverty Forum. This forum was established by Ards Community Network to find local solutions to addressing poverty in the Ards area. |
| Food Poverty  | The wider engagement team have delivered an engagement event with Downpatrick Food Bank around adult education opportunities. The School of Hospitality and Tourism delivered a highly successful Christmas Dinner event for clients of Bangor Foodbank at the SERC Bangor Campus. Students and staff from across academic and corporate functions supported this event. A WRAP {Women Returners Access Programme} Commenced delivery in November 2023 at the Well-Fed Social Supermarket, Newtownards. |  |
| Neurodiversity Café and Menopause Café projects with SERC and the South Eastern Health Trust. | The South Eastern Health Trust delivered a ‘Neurodiverse Café and Menopause Café’ in Downpatrick Campus These events supported local people dealing with health issues to gain support. |  |
| Neighbourhood Renewal  | Newry Mourne and Down Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership and Kilcooley Neighbourhood Renewal PartnershipSERC are a partner across the Downpatrick and Kilcooley Neighbourhood renewal Partnership. This enables the continued success and development of work with communities to reengage the economically inactive in education.  |  |

**Strategic partnerships and programme development. Community, Voluntary and Statutory Sector Engagement.**The summary below highlights the work undertaken with partners to develop relationships, support the achievement of SERC objectives and address wider community issues and social inclusion.* New relationships have been developed with Women’s Aid in the Bangor area to identify opportunities for further partnership working with vulnerable women.
* The successful partnership with Kilcooley Primary School, has enabled further links with local Primary School Principals in the area. The Head of Engagement and Development is working with Westwind’s Primary School to explore programmes for parents in the local community.
* New opportunities have emerged through our ongoing partnership with the SEHSCT Social Work Team and the Public Health Agency. The DHOS for Adult Learning and Head of Engagement are developing an approach to engage men in the Newcastle area with a view to enabling them to access pathways back to education while addressing health inequalities and barriers to learning.
* New relationships have been developed with Clanrye in the Downpatrick area and have identified opportunities for further partnership working with vulnerable women.
* Site visit in March 2024 to Ballynahinch for a Wellbeing Event, hosted by Choice Housing. Opportunity for engagement with clients.

**Community Engagement, Labour Market and Job events:*** Attended 3 local Job Fairs including LCCC Jobs Fair, Ards & North Down Job Fairs at Bangor Aurora, and Blair Mayne Leisure Centre Newtownards
* Organised and hosted visit to Ards Campus by Groomsport AEP.
* Attended 2 NMD Labour Market Partnership Employer Engagement Events for Hospitality and Tourism and Engineering.
 |
| **Monitor, Evaluate and Review Equality Improvement Plan**The Equality Scheme was reviewed and implemented in 2022 to cover the five-year period until 2027 and is kept under review. The Equality Schemes Action Plan and Disability Action Plans are monitored annually by the Equality Officer.  |

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|  |

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|  |  |
| **3** | Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [ ]  Yes [x]  No (go to Q.4)[ ]  Not applicable (go to Q.4) |
|  | Please provide any details and examples: |
|  | Click or tap here to enter text. |
|  |  |
| **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: |
|  | n/a |
|  |  |
| **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 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [ ]  Yes, organisation wide[ ]  Yes, some departments/jobs[ ]  No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment[x]  No, this has already been done[ ]  Not applicable |
|  | Please provide any details and examples: |
|  | Click or tap here to enter text. |
|  |  |
| **5** | Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [x]  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: |
|  | Click or tap here to enter text. |
|  |  |
| **6** | In the 2023-24 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)* |
|  | [x]  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 2023-24 report[ ]  Not applicable |
|  | Please provide any details and examples: |
|  | Equality and Diversity training was developed and is a mandatory module for all staff and must be undertaken every 2 years.Mental Health Awareness mandatory was devised and is a mandatory module for all staff and must be undertaken every 2 years. |
|  |  |
|  | **Equality action plans/measures** |
| **7** | Within the 2023-24 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of: |
|  | Actions completed: 8Actions ongoing:0Actions to commence:0 |
|  | Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*): |
|  | Actions are completed within the Action Plan, however they are kept under review and monitored annually. Please refer to section 2 above which fully demonstrates examples and outcomes in the equality action plan for 2022-2027 for measures undertaken 2023/24. |
|  |  |
| **8** | Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2023-24 reporting period *(points not identified in an appended plan)*: |
|  | The Equality scheme was revised with a new action plan and was finalised in March 2022 and no further changes or amendments were made to the scheme or the action plans during the 2023-24 reporting period. |
|  |  |
| **9** | In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2023-24 reporting period, the following have been identified: *(tick all that apply)* ***Is it not applicable?*** |
|  | [ ]  x 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[ ]  x 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[x]  N/a |
|  |  |
| **11** | Please provide any **details and examples** **of good practice** in consultation during the 2023-24 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: |
|  | Three new/revised policies have been approved and placed on the College’s learning engine for staff to access which included Little SERC’s Fees Policy, SERC Voluntary Severance Scheme and Fees policy for 24/25. Also, three policies were screened during the reporting period by the FE Sector group, Parental leave, Maternity leave, and FE Sector Voluntary Severance Scheme and all were all screened out. |
|  |  |
| **12** | In the 2023-24 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[ ]  X 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: |
|  | n/a |
|  |  |
| **13** | Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No [x]  Not applicable  |
|  | Please provide any details and examples: |
|  | Click or tap here to enter text. |
|  |  |
| **14** | Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[x]  Not applicable – no commitment to review was undertaken the previous year when revising the Equality Scheme. |
|  |  |
|  | **Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)** |
|  | [Public Information - SERC](https://www.serc.ac.uk/public-information/equality) |
| **15** | Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*): |
|  | Three policies were screened by SERC and three were screened via the FE Sector group. |
|  |  |
| **16** | Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2023-24: |
|  | n/a Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented. n/a Policy consultations conducted **with an** **equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented.n/a 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: |
|  | All policies screened were screened out and no consultation was required. |
|  |  |
| **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 [x]  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 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[x]  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 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No, already taken place [ ]  No, scheduled to take place at a later date[x]  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 [x]  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 2023-24 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: |
|  | n/a |
|  |  |
|  | **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 2023-24, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme. |
|  | As part of the College Induction all new starts are required to complete the on-line training modules in the Learning Engine and when staff have reached renewal dates.Staff have completed a number of mandatory modules in the field of Equality and Good Relations on the Learning Engine from April 23 to March 24. These have included Equality and Diversity – 307 staff i.e. 30.7%, Safeguarding, Care and Welfare – 622 staff i.e. 62.2%, Mental Health Awareness – 655 staff i.e. 65.5%, Accessibility – 354 staff, i.e. 35.4%, 669 staff i.e. 66.9% - supporting equality and good relations.  The previous “SENDO” module was reviewed in November 2023, content was refreshed and renamed to “Supporting Students with additional needs” to ensure content was accurate and current. The Learning Academy staff and Pedagogy Mentors were upskilled in ‘Neurodiversity’ by a colleague from the Enterprise & Entrepreneurship team who is developed an OCNNI Level 3 Award in Neurodiversity in the Workplace.   In addition, this neurodiversity workshop was delivered to corporate staff during Staff Development with thirty-two staff attending. The Learning Academy Team also attended online training sessions and workshops delivered as part of “Neurodiversity Celebration Week” and the links were sent out to staff and recording placed on the Equality and Diversity App. In continued response to the growing LGBTQIA+ community within SERC, diversity training was again delivered to raise awareness, inform, and sensitively support this diversity amongst staff and students.  Seventeen staff attended the online session delivered by Cara Friend.  Resources were shared with us by Cara Friend, and these have been made available to staff on the SharePoint site for those who unable to attend. |
|  |  |
| **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: |
|  | Through refresher cycles issued twice per year and new employees have obtained and passed online mandatory modules which are made available via the Learning Engine. Modules demonstrate to staff the colleges commitment to equality, diversity, and good relations |
|  |  |
|  | **Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)** |
| **26** | Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2023-24, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**: |
|  | n/a |
|  |  |
|  | **Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)** |
| **27** | How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2023-24?  |
|  | Insert number here: 0 |
|  | Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome: |
|  | Click or tap here to enter text. |

**Section 3: Looking Forward**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **28** | Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review: |
|  | The current Equality Scheme is due for renewal in 2027 as the existing scheme is effective from April 2022 to 2027. |
|  |  |
| **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)* |
|  | The Disability Action plan is due for review in 2024 and this will be undertaken with the FE Sector Group.Online Screening for policyholder’s mandatory for managers will be disseminated in 2024/25 academic year. |
|  |  |
| **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)* |
|  | [x]  Employment[x]  Goods, facilities, and services[x]  Legislative changes[x]  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:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **9** | **2** | **0** |
| Fully achieved | Partially achieved | Not achieved |

2. Please outline below details on all **actions that have been fully achieved** in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level | Public Life Action Measures | Outputs[[1]](#endnote-2) | Outcomes / Impact[[2]](#endnote-3) |
| National[[3]](#endnote-4) | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Regional[[4]](#endnote-5) | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Local[[5]](#endnote-6) | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. | Click or tap here to enter text. |

2(b) what **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

|  | Training Action Measures | Outputs | Outcome / Impact |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Increase awareness of specific barriers faced by people with a disability including through linking in with National Awareness days or weeks.** | SERC has obtained Level 1 and Level 2 of the Disability Confident Committed Scheme which is valid for 3 years. As a Disability Confident Employer, SERC has committed to:* ensure our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible;
* communicating and promoting vacancies;
* offering an interview to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job;
* anticipating and providing reasonable adjustments as required; and
* supporting any existing employee who acquires a disability or long-term health condition, enabling them to stay in work at least one activity that will make a difference for disabled people.

International Person with Disability Awareness Day on the 3 December 2023 | Article places on the staff intranet and Equality and Good Relations App. Created awareness and advised on the colleges provision such as AccessAble and Disability Confident Employer  |
|  | **Encourage students with a disability to participate more fully in college life.** | The Learning Support Team provides help and guidance to students with additional needs relating to a disability, learning difficulty or long-term medical condition. The Neurodivergent Support Club was set up by the Bangor Disability Officer with 5 students involved. They had identified the need for students to share their experiences and make connections outside of their class.  | During academic year 23/24 the Learning Support Team support 900 students to meet their individual needs which included either on a one to one or classroom support basis; the provision of Learning Support ‘drop in’ hubs; the provision of additional technology such as a laptop, iPad, or specialist software; the provision of physical resources such as adjustable height desk or orthopaedic chair; a sign language interpreter. SERC engaged with other external agencies where appropriate to avail of specialist support provision for students with disabilities which involved targeted learning support, as well as mentoring and skills development to assist in building independent learning skills.Access arrangements are reasonable adjustments which allow learners with additional educational needs or disabilities to access their assessments. The Learning Support Team works closely with students, tutors, and the examinations team to ensure that access arrangements are in place where appropriate. Examples of the type of arrangements provided during the 23/24 academic year include arranging technological support such as reader pens or computers, facilitating extra time and arranging for modified examination papers to be available, such as with larger fonts or printed on coloured paper. This peer led model has also allowed for students to raise awareness of student needs to the Equality & Diversity Officer.   |
|  | **Introduce training for front line staff on disability etiquette and relevant legislation dealing with disability and the provision of goods, facilities, and services.** | In previous reporting period front line staff attended training on systems to assist those with hearing difficulties. | Loop systems are in place in reception areas, and staff have undertaken online training. |
|  | **Create an open an inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those with mental ill health** | In conjunction with the Mental Health Charter, SERC remains committed to employee’s mental health and overall wellbeing through the Mind Yourself programme which delivers a vast range of activities and information sessions to support staff and students’ wellbeing. | The college recognises and provides information and events on Suicide Awareness Day, Mental Health Awareness Day/Weeks, Stress awareness days and Time to Talk Day as outlined previously.Students Union and Welfare and Pastoral Care teams support student health and wellbeing and recognise and provides information and events on support services e.g. Inspire Wellbeing stands at Freshers, Action Mental Health personal resilience sessions. |
|  | **Through Widening Participation scheme increase number of students with a disability entering the College.**  | SERC has created a reactive and pro-active marketing and communications plan for, with the main objective of recruiting a diverse student population as outlined above. | Attracting and recruiting a more diverse student population by the mediums used. |
|  | **Explore the scope of offering meaning placements and work shadowing and volunteering for people with a disability.** | The UK Government’s Turing Scheme is a unique global programme for studying, working, and living abroad, offering once-in-a-lifetime opportunities for personal and professional development for students across the world. This scheme provides fully funded opportunities for SERC students to travel anywhere in the world for a period of unpaid work or study with a particular emphasis on those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities. From September 2023, 87 students and 19 accompanying staff undertook work placements in Spain, Malta, Tenerife, and South Africa to improve their technical and transversal skills and make a positive impact on their career prospects. | These opportunities are open to all SERC students regardless of their background or ability and a transparent recruitment and selection process was applied to ensure equality of opportunity. (Further details outline previously) |
|  | **Monitor and review the progress of the Disability Action Plan.** | This plan is monitored, reviewed and through the FE Sector group and the Internal Equality Working Group. | Following the meeting with NI Union of Supported Employment who had met with the FE Sector group to raise awareness and provide advice to help individuals with disabilities to move into employment, a proposal had been sent to members for their review, as requested by the HRWG. Work has been completed with Getgot system in conjunction with RNIB through the FE Sector group.At the Internal Equality Working Group it was outlined on the potential difficulty with students with a learning difficulty and the marketing team promote Accessible through their events and promotional work. Barriers to education remains an ongoing item on the agenda. |

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

|  | Communications Action Measures | Outputs | Outcome / Impact  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | **Promote the use of AccessAble website to encourage participation of prospect students.** | SERC is in its 2nd year of its current 3-year of its contract which provides accessible information on SERC’s facilities which are available for visitors, staff, and students. Promotion for AccessAble is done with leaflets and plaques in reception areas of campuses, information sessions for staff and advertising on the SERC website The marketing team ran advertorials which have included reference to inclusivity of campuses, Learning Support services on all campuses, and the SERC partnership with AccessAble to share information about campus accessibility.Information session was held for Learning Support staff on the AccessAble site and its benefits to students and visitors | Users in 22/23 was 468 and this has increased to 577 users in 23/24 reporting period. |
| 2 | **Encourage students with a disability to participate more fully in college life**. | Students with disabilities have been encouraged to take part more fully in college life through representation on college committees as well as participating in onsite events. | The SU oversaw the election of a strong cohort of Liberation officers for the 23/24 academic year with 47 students being nominated with 11 of the 17 officers being successfully elected to liberation roles. Each campus’ liberation roles were led by an Equality and Diversity Officer. There were also specific officers whose role was to focus on LGBTQIA, ethnic minorities, Trans, Women’s, and Disabled issues on campus. These officer teams were involved with informing and supporting the needs of liberations groups on each SERC campus. The Neurodivergent Support Club was set up by the Bangor Disability Officer with 5 students involved. They had identified the need for students to share their experiences and make connections outside of their class. This peer led model has also allowed for students to raise awareness of student needs to the Equality & Diversity Officer.   |

2 (d) what action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others’** to promote the two duties:

|  | Encourage others Action Measures | Outputs | Outcome / Impact  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | **Continue to encourage the participation of disabled people on committees, student representatives on the Governing Body groups across the College**. | The Students Union held elections for disabled officers and have representatives on their groups. | Participation and involvement from representatives in college groups to influence College policy and decisions. |
| 2 | **Explore the scope of offering meaningful placements and work shadowing and volunteering for people with a disability.** | The Training Organisation works closely with Disability Action to assist students with placements and work experience. SERC encourages students with disabilities to access internal and external placement opportunities and will assist and guide students and placement providers to consider and implement reasonable adjustments to ensure that a safe and secure placement opportunity is provided. | This remains ongoing and reviewed for each student to meet their own individual requirements. |

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

|  | Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures) | Outputs | Outcomes / Impact  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

|  | Action Measures partly achieved | Milestones/ Outputs  | Outcomes/Impacts | Reasons not fully achieved |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | **Consider development of a (Sectoral) Disability Advisory group that could involve staff and students** | Disability Action plan remains an ongoing item on the agenda at the FE Sector group. | No individual Disability Advisory Group has been set up; items are discussed at the FE Sector group. | Ongoing |
| 2 | **The College 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 to include members with disabilities. | Difficulty with achievement of this measure due to appointments being made externally. |

4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

|  | Action Measures not met | Reasons |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | n/a |       |
| 2 |       |       |
|  |       |       |

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

* The Internal Equality Working group meet 3 to 4 times per academic year and set up an agenda and keep under review actions.
* The Chief HR Officer monitored actions as part of the reporting process to the Governing Body.
* Evaluations are completed following training for feedback.
* SERC became a Disability Confident Employer in April 2022 and has obtained Level 1 and 2 status, and procedures and processes are kept under review to develop new opportunities for actions.

(b) Quantitative

* The annual student survey the “Big 14 Survey” is undertaken annually to help identify trends or increases/decreases in satisfaction.
* The use of data from the QLS systems allows for monitoring of students with disabilities.
* The on-line training modules to assess the number of staff trained and completion of tasks as demonstrated in the document.
* The Colleges complaint procedure ensures all complaints are recorded and those relating to disability are communicated.
* Yearly Action Plans based on priorities are developed within the Mind Yourself Programme, activities and support remain ongoing with the Mental Health Charter, the Mental Health Policy and Mental Health Action Plans and the Everyone Counts Charter and the Governing Body are updated annually on actions and progress for the academic years.

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

* made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
* taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

If yes, please outline below: n/a

|  | Revised/Additional Action Measures | Performance Indicator | Timescale |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | n/a |       |       |
| 2 |       |       |       |
| 3 |       |       |       |
| 4 |       |       |       |
| 5 |       |       |       |

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation’s annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes

1. **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. **Local :** Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)