SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties

Annual Progress Report 2023-24

This is the seventeenth Equality Progress Report prepared by Southern Regional College. The report covers the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

This progress report has been prepared in accordance with the templates and prompts provided by the Equality obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations across the College. The College has also consulted with the Equality Commission in relation to the completion of this report.

The report also records progress on the implementation of the positive duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order 2006.

Southern Regional College remains fully committed to fulfilment of the Section 75 obligations under the 1998 Act and the achievement of measures developed to implement positive duties under DDO 2006. We believe this report is reflective of our commitment.

In relation to progress, the report reflects activities during the reporting period and has been endorsed by the Staffing Committee of the Governing Body of Southern Regional College on (date to be confirmed).

SIGNED: _Gary M Callumay_

CHAIR - STAFFING COMMITTEE

SIGNED: _K Campbell_

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Southern Regional College

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties

Annual Progress Report 2023-24

Contact:

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• Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan	Name: As above Telephone: As above Email: As above	

Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

Equality, Diversion & Inclusion | Southern Regional College (src.ac.uk)

Signature:

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.

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
ABC	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
ACE	Adverse Childhood Experiences
APPNI	Apprenticeships NI
BSI	Business Support and Innovation
CAFM	Computer Aided Facilities management System
CAO	Central Applications Office
CDI	Career Development Institute
CEIAG	Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance
CLR	Careers Learning Resources
CSR	Construction Skills Register
CV	Curriculum vita
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DAP	Disability Action Plan
DfC	Department for Communities
DfE	Department for the Economy
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FE	Further Education
FEMR	Fair Employment Monitoring Return
HE	Higher Education
HLAs	Higher-Level Apprenticeships
JCQ	Joint Council for Qualifications
KA2	Key Action 2
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LMP	Labour Market Partnerships
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual and many other terms
LRC	Learning Resource Centre
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NMDC	Newry and Mourne District Council
NPORS	NPORS 360 Excavator course
NUS USI	National Union of Students Northern Ireland
OCN NI	Open College Network Northern Ireland
PBL	Project Based Learning
PCSP	Policing and Community Safety Partnership
PEAS	Pre-Entry Advice and Guidance
PSNI	Police Service Northern Ireland
RITTB	Road Transport Industry Training Board
RNIB	Royal National Institute of Blind People
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator
SIA	Security Industry Authority
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SPP	School Partnership Programme

SRC	Southern Regional College
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
SU	Student Union
TFS	Training for Skills
UCAS	University and Colleges Admissions Service
UK	United Kingdom
W3C	World Wide Web Consortium

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 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.

Southern Regional College (SRC) has promoted equality of opportunity and good relations through delivery of our strategic aims as set out in the annual College Development Plan.

Aim 1: Provision of a high-quality learning experience through a relevant and meaningful curriculum

Community Engagement Strategy

Widening Access and Community Engagement

SRC's curriculum offer aims to serve the needs of the wider communities of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and the regions of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

The College's strategic aims and objectives are set in the context of the wider policy environment. These strategic aims and objectives are therefore closely aligned to our sponsor Department, the Department for the Economy (DfE), whose Public Service Agreement sets targets and commitments aligned to the Executive's draft Programme for Government and the 10X Economic Vision and Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland. In summary, the College aims to address three important areas through its curriculum offering and business support activities:

- Economic development through the provision of courses designed to meet the needs of the local and regional economy particularly in priority sectors;
- Personal development through opportunities for further study and learning at all levels in preparation for working life and into retirement; and
- Social development, allowing people from different community backgrounds to participate on a wide range of courses at all levels.

SRC is fully committed to supporting widening access and participation at all levels and across all curricula offered across the region. The annual College Development Plan sets out the College's purpose, values, and vision for the provision of education and training and embodies the Colleges commitment to working effectively together in providing skills solutions that meet current and emerging economic demand. The plan specifically addresses the needs of 3 groups of people, those entering the workforce, those already in the

workforce and those furthest away from work. The College continued to deliver quality Further Education and Training, Higher Education and Higher-Level Apprenticeships (HLAs) catering for 21,176 learner enrolments. The College has an External Engagement Team who play a significant role in addressing the education needs of those living in areas of greatest deprivation and helping people and communities to overcome inequality and disadvantage in education and training.

This team is committed to widening participation of those who face significant barriers to education and training including those economically inactive, those with learning difficulties and disabilities, those from under-represented groups in society and those not in employment or training.

The College's curriculum strategy aims to provide a relevant and fit for purpose curriculum to service the needs of the wider community across the Southern Region, which includes 15 of the top 100 most deprived areas in Northern Ireland. The College's External Engagement outreach team has prioritised its resources on these areas of deprivation by delivering programmes aimed at supporting people and communities to overcome inequality and disadvantage through education and training. In 2023-2024, 49.02% of the College's total enrolment were from students within population quintiles 1 and 2 with 49.57% of the total community outreach provision supporting learners within population quintiles 1 and 2.

Prioritising provision in areas of significant deprivation will continue to remain a focus in 2024/2025 despite the challenges to funding and the College will continue to work with the Department for Communities (DfC), Department of Economy (DfE), Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and local councils to seek opportunities for funding to provide education and training opportunities in these areas as part of the wider community planning process.

In the reporting period, the Community Team worked in partnership with approximately 100 community and statutory organisations and groups covering over 1,500 square miles to ensure the College identified and met their needs. Many of these organisations or groups are in areas of economic disadvantage or rural isolation and the College actively utilises the space these organisations or groups have as community outreach centres enabling the College to provide education and resources at the heart of a community.

The Community team play an active role in promoting all community outreach programmes. They support those that are unemployed to reskill and find a pathway to employment and a better outcome for all families. The team work in partnership with Community groups and other agencies such as Jobs and Benefits and Youth Services to identify the skill needs and open pathways to employment. SRC receive funding from the Department of Communities to enable them to deliver a tailored response to community needs. Working alongside statutory organisations, employers and service providers, the College offers a wide and diverse portfolio of learning opportunities that connect local people with realistic employment opportunities and life improving skills. These courses range from essential skills programmes in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT, or employment focused training in transport, manufacturing, beauty, construction, catering, security, and other sectors. As well as achieving City and Guilds essential skills certificates, learners can obtain a range of

vocational qualifications, such as NPORS Excavator; Category C lorry and RITTB forklift licences; SIA security licences; CSR cards; various health and safety certificates; Nail and Beauty qualifications; and RSPH Food Hygiene certificates.

To support students with special educational needs, the Community Team work with residential care homes and day care providers across the southern region to address issues experienced by residents including isolation, encouraging social interaction, as well as enhancing skills and increasing their confidence and self-esteem.

As a means of supporting diversity and social inclusion, the College helps many local people in overcoming barriers to learning by providing flexible delivery methods which enables them sample vocational learning, supported placements opportunities and gain qualifications to help them progress to the next stage in their career.

The Community Team is an active member of five Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Boards (NRPBs) within the southern region made up of statutory organisations, resident associations, and local community groups. The Community Team, work in collaboration with the College's Business Support Team to identify the needs of local employers and to connect them with the hardest to reach in society by securing the commitment from key individuals in local communities to identify and support local under-employed individuals. The Community Team, as active members of NRPBs, implement projects (funded by the Department for Communities (DfC) that specifically target those living within the five neighbourhood renewal areas of Armagh, Brownlow, Lurgan, Newry and Portadown with free industry focused training and employment enhancing opportunities. The projects also help students overcome barriers to training by providing assistance with their CVs; transport to training; accommodation and catering; and extra one-to-one mentoring support for residents when required.

Through DfC projects in 2023-2024, the Team successfully enrolled 305 residents onto training programmes, providing industry recognised qualifications or licenses to upskill and improve employability. These training courses have enabled 16% of these residents to achieve employment.

In summary, the Community Team delivered 5 specialised projects that engaged with the most disadvantaged people in society. These projects make a distinctive contribution to providing local people with the knowledge, skills and qualifications required to gain employment, especially with local employers.

To enable hard to reach learners to access courses the College provides a regional wide newsletter (mail drop), advertising details of Further Education courses available in local community venues and college campuses; a community newsletter updating residents on locally focused training programmes and a direct up-to-date link to all community educational programmes and support via the College community Facebook and website.

Going forward, the continued fiscal pressures and the review of the People and Places Strategy is likely to lead to further reductions in the level of support across the community at all levels to support delivery. The budget uncertainty has left a challenging space from

April to June 2024, this coupled with the new Labour Market Partnership and other UKSP fund projects focusing on addressing the economically inactive, has meant that the External Engagement team has had to refocus its efforts to ensure the continuation of funding to support those farthest from the labour market.

The College has successfully pursued several funding streams to support delivery for 2024/2025 which are detailed below:

- Secured £227,067.71 for 5 DfC projects for the 2024/25 academic year, to widen participation in education and training programmes for people who are economically inactive and face social exclusion.
- Secured funding from DLUHC under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to the value of just over £3 Million to deliver a new and innovative employability project (Employ Me) with the Clanrye Group, Women's Aid and Community Advice Newry Mourne Down to provide training, employment and wraparound support for economically inactive people aged 16 plus to reduce job related barriers, develop skills, achieve qualifications, enhance employability and quality of life with a view to progressing to employment /self-employment. This project has been very successful and in Year 1 (April 23- Mar24) has recruited 863 participants to the programme.
- Secured £2.2 Million from Northern Ireland Office as part of New Deal Fund to provide a Skills, Training and Employment Programme. This is a collaborative six College proposal targeted at unemployed and economically inactive people who face barriers to fully engage in skills and education opportunities. The programme has 4 targeted strands-Women Returners, those with a disability, Connect 24+ for those aged over 25 and Connect+ for young people aged 16-24 that are NEETs. The programme provides mentoring support, training opportunities and courses ranging from 12 – 36 weeks duration that will include job coaching, work sampling, level 1 and 2 interventions. The programme has had a positive impact and 242 participants were recruited in Year 1.

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

The Careers Team support learners through a range of activities such as Induction, Central Registration, Higher Education applications (UCAS and CAO), Pre-Entry Advice and Guidance (PEAS) interviews and HE presentations. These activities enable students to develop their knowledge, understanding, skills and experience of the extensive range of career opportunities. It allows students to manage their career development, making informed choices, with successful transition into education, training, and employment. The Careers Service developed an expanded range of new digital resources during the reporting period. This included:

- Higher Level Apprenticeship Guidance Webinar
- Higher Education Progression Options Webinar
- Introduction to the SRC Careers Service Video
- Introduction to the Unifrog Platform Webinar
- ClickView Digital Resources - 261 videos
- My World of Work Digital Resource e.g. College and Uni Students – 15 videos
- SRC Careers Service Qualification Equivalencies Communication Flyer
- UCAS Learner Agreement Data Capture (Canvas)

There are now several hundred digital resources available for the College student body to access to support their career planning and development activities.

Feedback on the advice provided by SRC Careers Service:

"Can I say a big thank you for attending our Careers Event. I can't thank you enough. Feedback has been brilliant reference the SRC and the participants seen to have got a lot from it" Feedback from an External Partner.

"Hello xxx. it is xxx here. we spoke about the Paramedic Science interview. just a wee update on that I was given an offer to the BSc Paramedic Science in Magee this year. Just want to thank you for the advice that it was much appreciated and helped a lot. Thank you! Feedback from an SRC student.

"You have taught me guidance on where to go after tech and I thank you very much for that. I have huge respect and admiration for you and so do others who you have helped and would be lost without you, so thank you again for everything." Feedback from an SRC Student.

The SRC Careers Team supports learners in developing their knowledge, understanding, skills and experience providing them with opportunities to manage their career development and make informed choices. Through engagement with a range of external stakeholders, including the Clanrye Group, DfE, Careers Service, Area Learning Community Careers Forums and local feeder schools, the Careers Service has been able to assist students moving into supported employment and transfer to supported programmes which catered for students' individual abilities. This work by the team has assisted students in overcoming barriers to progression and transitions resulting in positive outcomes for students.

In December 2023, the Careers Service successfully achieved re-accreditation of the Matrix Quality Standard. The Matrix Standard is the international quality standard for organisations that deliver information, advice and/or guidance (IAG), either as their sole purpose or as part of their service offering.

The assessment report noted:

"Staff across the College were very clear about the contributions the Service makes to the work of the College, with comments that included students exhibiting increased confidence and self-esteem, increased personal and career aspirations, taking personal responsibility for decisions made, gaining a qualification, and progressing, etc. Students described how during every intervention with Service staff, progress made towards the achievement of their personally agreed career outcome(s) are reviewed and the next steps agreed."

Pre-entry guidance facilitated by the SRC Careers Service is available to all individuals considering studying at the College. Prospective students can access the Careers Service through a variety of sources including the College Prospectus, Open Days/Evenings, and on the relevant section on the SRC website. Potential students can make an appointment with

the Careers Service to receive guidance on their course options, including courses available, entry requirements and progression routes.

The team adapt a flexible and adaptable approach to the delivery of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) tailored to the individual needs of each client including through e-mail, face-to-face, telephone and through Microsoft Teams. While face-to-face delivery has resumed, there is an increasing demand for virtual guidance. This range of delivery methods gives clients options and provides enhanced accessibility for service users.

The College's Careers Manager is the representative for the 6 Further Education Colleges, in the Careers Advisory Common Quality Standards Group. The key objective of this group is to design and agree common quality standards for careers guidance in Northern Ireland. This is a recommendation set out in 'The Skills for a 10x Economy Strategy' published by the DfE. This group is currently collecting evidence to produce a report which summarises the quality assurance measures each provider has in place.

The SRC Careers Service has Affiliate membership of the Career Development Institute and works to the Career Development Institute (CDI) Code of Principles and adheres to the standards of professional behavior as set out in their principles:

- Duty of Care – to Clients, Colleagues, Organisations and Self Members have a duty of care and are expected always to act in the best interests of their clients.

- Equality - Members actively promote equality and diversity and work towards the removal of barriers to personal achievement resulting from prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. Members must treat clients equally regardless of their gender, age, race, ethnicity, disability, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation.

The Careers Service, therefore, actively promotes equality of opportunity and works towards the removal of personal achievement resulting from prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination.

The Careers Team works with users equally regardless of their gender, age, race, disability, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation. Users are made aware of the practical steps the service can take such as providing literature in a format that meets the needs of the user for example larger text. This is highlighted in a statement at the bottom of literature as a footnote.

Through online training all the Careers Team are aware of the requirements to implement and promote equality, impartiality, confidentially and professional integrity. At the start of the guidance interview the Careers Officers make the confidentiality statement to users. Students starting the College are also made aware of the appropriate policies and how to access them if required. Users are made aware of the practical steps the service can take such as providing literature in a format that meets the needs of the user for example larger text. All SRC documentation emphasises the confidential and diverse nature of the service delivery.

The SRC Careers Service considers the realistic interpretation of relevant statutory legislation when making users aware of the career options available to them. For example, a user with a career aspiration such as electrician or air traffic controller who present with a significant disability such as colour blindness. To determine the suitability of the users in this instance the careers advisor will work through a multi-disciplinary team approach to clarify the Health & Safety implications of this career pathway. A user who presents with a criminal conviction that is on the child protection register and who wishes to pursue a career in working with children or vulnerable adults. In this case there is a need to comply with legislation therefore the careers officer will use a multi-disciplinary approach when giving advice to this user.

One of the aims of the SRC Careers Service is Widening Participation, including the implementation CEIAG Strategies to widen the educational participation of those most marginalised in society including those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and individuals who are vulnerable to social exclusion through signposting individuals to NEET initiatives such as College Connect and Employ Me.

The SRC Careers Service subscribes to the UK NARIC Database which enables international students presenting with qualification to have their qualifications equated to United Kingdom standard, enabling the Careers team to advise clients on the most suitable pathway.

The Careers Team on an ongoing basis continue to facilitate pre-entry advice and guidance to foreign nationals who have relocated to Northern Ireland. This included providing statement of equivalency for their native qualifications and signposting them to learning opportunities including ESOL courses to improve their English where appropriate.

Careers Team Engagement April 2023 – March 2024	Individual Interview	Query	Telephone Calls	Email
	925	22	1347	1328

Learning Resource Centers (LRCs)

LRCs support teaching and learning across all subject areas in the College. Staff and students are provided with access to a wide range of learning resources through Canvas, (the College's virtual learning environment). This includes:

- A comprehensive study skills programme.
- A strong learner development programme including collaboration with partner HE institutions.
- A comprehensive collection of e-resources to support teaching and learning.

LRC staff ensure that all users can easily access learning resources, both electronic and non-electronic, by providing 24/7 access to resources through the College's Virtual Learning Environment. LRC staff have established and continue to sustain national and international links with strategic information resources, which facilitate research and learning

techniques. The use of e-books continues to evolve with the College again ranked highly as one of the top users of e-books in the Further and Higher Education Sector in the United Kingdom.

The continued development of electronic resources, particularly e–books and the purchase of additional online databases enhances embedded learning and contributes to the College's ILT strategy commitment of providing coordinated management of Learning Resources.

The Learning Resource Team has increased the College's e-resource collection by 13.7% to include e-journals and online databases. An additional electronic resource added this year is the Oxford University 'Great Writers Inspire', this collection is aimed at students studying Literature and complements the new Literature and Modern History Degree. It contains lectures, eBooks, and contextual essays for reuse by the educational community. It includes thousands of individual items as well as curated thematic and historical collections to help students research and interrogate their literary ideas. Another supplementary online database added this year is 'Writers make Worlds'. This is an open educational resource hub for Black and Asian British Writing today. This contains the work of literature and opinions by authors that fundamentally challenge prevailing ideas of British literature.

This year the Learning Resource Centres have conducted a book cleanse, communicating with lecturers to retire out-of-date resources. Over £5000 was spent updating hardcopy stock focussing on Higher Education, due to the higher usage figures for hardcopy resources in that demographic.

Over 30 new e-book titles were added to the e-book portfolio in a range of academic areas that support recent additions to the curriculum e.g. Literature and Modern History, Mechatronics and Business Systems.

The Learning Resource Team co-ordinated the process of the issue and return of 100 laptops to students who had exceptional circumstances. This initiative which included providing students with the relevant software on their laptop enabled and supported students to engage in remote learning and study.

A new online database Google Scholar was implemented to provide students with a simple way to broadly search for academic literature. An additional study skills database offers students advice on time-management, writing skills, presenting and study skills. There is a vast adjustment between leaving school and moving to further education, therefore the team has provided a literacy resource, that provides further instruction on literature reviews, essays, and reports. A range of podcasts relevant to Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Science, and Industry subject areas are available.

Aim 2: Support economic growth and innovation through flexible business support solutions

International Women's Day
The College sponsored this year's International Women's Day event with Newry Chamber, hosted at Killeavy Castle Estate. The College is committed to promoting women in

leadership and the College actively encourages women to take up management positions. The College provides a range of support for new managers including accredited management training. The College has a range of health and wellbeing resources as well as family friendly policies to support all employees, including a new menopause policy.

The College continued to deliver the Women Returners programme to encourage and support women back into the world of work, by providing up-to-date skills, mentoring, confidence building and motivational training. Local employers have been very receptive to this programme and have spoken highly of the learners' capabilities upon completion of the training. More females are applying for programmes of study that have traditionally been male dominated, including engineering, technology, and construction. There is a commitment to target females in promotional campaigns to ensure there is equality of opportunity for everyone across a range of vocational areas and industry sectors.

Business Support and Innovation

The Business Support and Innovation (BSI) team continued to deliver a range of supports to sole traders, micro businesses, SMEs, and large companies throughout 2023-2024. The team offers support across three key pillars:

1. Knowledge Transfer and Innovation
2. Upskilling and workforce development
3. Talent Acquisition through a range of Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLAs).

The BSI unit supported just over 800 businesses in 2023-2024. The unit also secured over 1200 enrolments through a range of accredited courses from Level 2 to Level 5, plus some bespoke training programmes as required for business clients. Some examples of key work are detailed below.

Skills Focus and InnovateUs Programmes for SMEs

Funded by the DfE, the flagship business support programmes "InnovateUs" and "Skills Focus" continued to be 100% funded to SMEs during 2023-2024 and include social enterprises. The Business Support team prioritised these much-needed support programmes and agreed to undertake additional projects during 2023-2024 to ensure the needs of local businesses were met. A lot of the support required was in digital skills as many small businesses continue to move their services and operations online. There was also increasing demand for innovation services and product development support, particularly from food businesses. The team delivered most of the support to businesses based in ABC and NMDC council areas.

Skill Up – The Flexible Skills Fund

Fully funded by DfE, the Skill Up (Flexible Skills Fund) has been established to help upskill and reskill individuals to meet the needs of the economy as we emerge from the pandemic and instill a culture of lifelong learning with courses that are accessible for all. The College has developed and delivered a range of short courses for individuals, most of which were delivered virtually, including digital skills, data analytics, leadership and management, health and social care, childcare, green technologies, and advanced engineering. The

College also designed and delivered a programme specifically aimed at women returners including a business administration level 3 qualification, work placement, mentoring and soft skills. This programme was very successful with the fourth cohort delivered in 2023-2024, supporting 16 women into jobs. The Skill Up programme generated over 600 enrolments and great opportunities for local people to gain recognised qualifications in key economic priority areas. Further curriculum development activities took place in 2023-2024 to develop a suite of courses for SMEs in Sustainability. SRC focused on sustainable construction, with the other colleges focusing on different sectors. This suite of support will be available to SMEs in 2024-25.

BIG Apprenticeship Event
The BIG Apprenticeship Event is firmly established in SRC's events calendar, and the annual event was delivered in February 2024, with this year being the most successful year to date with over 1800 attendees in total in Newry and Craigavon. In partnership with ABC Borough Council and NMD District Council, the event was widely promoted across both council areas with almost 60 employers who exhibited. The feedback was very positive and there has been a 29% increase in the number of HLA applications to the College for September 2024 (at May 2024), as well as an increase in employer vacancies.

Labour Market Partnerships (LMP)
Business Support represents the College in the local council LMPs which have been formed to develop a range of new employability provisions that address the specific labour market needs and challenges of the local areas. BSI developed several initiatives to support the aims of the LMPS. These included:
- Rapid Response Pharmacy academy
- Chef Bootcamp
- Digital skills academy
- Upskilling for Growth (range of courses to meet the needs of local employers)
- BIG Apprenticeship events

Themed Workshops and Events
In 2023-2024, there was a range of face-to-face workshops and events for employers which were well attended. Businesses are keen to reconnect and engage in person, to get the most out of the support available. Some virtual events were delivered and have been recorded and added to the BSI YouTube channel (301) Webinars - YouTube. Some of the BSI events this year included:

- Innovation Showcase Business Breakfast
- Open Campus Event and Job Fair
- AgriFood/AgriTech Showcase (in partnership with ABC Council)
- International Syngeries – Resource Matching workshop
- HACCP Training for SMEs
- Cross Border Tourism Conference
- HLA Engineering Employers Cluster
- Series of Web Casts.

Sustainability

The setting of the UN Sustainable Development Goals is one of the most crucial and humanitarian resolutions of the United Nations. The Further Education sector has an essential role in facilitating and supporting communities to achieve these sustainable goals across the globe. The College has a multifaceted role in establishing a sustainability culture in societies as well as training and producing graduates who are equipped with the knowledge and skills that enable them to take on and tackle the world challenges using sustainable approaches. Examples of how the FE sector has embedded sustainability across the College are:

- The college has worked with local community organisations to deliver a Level 2 Award in Reducing Carbon Footprints through Environmental Action to 35 learners via the GROW project. The qualification has provided the learners with an understanding of the impact of carbon dioxide emissions on climate change and how individuals, communities and organisations may contribute to reducing their impact.

- Social Impact - Project Based Learning, Football v Loneliness!
  As part of the PBL aspect of their studies four students from level 3 Health and Social Care course in Armagh developed a project focused on tackling the issue of loneliness in young people through the beautiful game. This innovative social initiative has young people coming together with a view to helping themselves and others substitute loneliness for friendship. The project was awarded second place in a sector wide PBL competition.

WorldSkills UK competition

The College topped the leaderboard at the WorldSkills UK competition for the second year in a row, with SRC students securing 5 gold medals, 3 silver medals, 4 bronze medal. Raymon Sloan, Chief Executive spoke of his delight at the results: -

"At Southern Regional College we place great emphasis on training, supporting, and mentoring our students to compete at regional, national and international level in their chosen areas, using this as a vital tool in the delivery of quality training for our students".

Aim 3: Inspired people and Organisation Development

Investors in People

The College retained the Investors in People silver award in March 2022. This is the second year of a three year continuous improvement action plan and key activities implemented during the reporting period included: -

- Introduction and inclusion of competence framework into recruitment, staff induction, probation and appraisal.
- Continuation of the OCN level 5 programme for new and aspiring managers.
- Sector Level 7 Strategic Leadership programme proposal drafted.
- Continuation of the development of the role of the HR Business partner providing one-to-one support for managers to establish a network of leaders.
- Implementation of Hybrid Working framework.
- Exploration of Staff Healthcare Scheme.
- Promotion of Staff Recognition Scheme.
- Appointment of new nominated staff and student charity.
- New HRD reporting processes implemented with the use of PowerBI.
- Talent Management Framework proposal drafted.

Corporate & Wellbeing conference

The College held its annual Corporate & Wellbeing conference on the first day of the new academic year in August 2023. An all-staff face-to-face style conference, with the theme "Embracing Change". The conference provided the opportunity for an all-staff event; to catch up with colleagues; to acknowledge and to celebrate the positive contribution of staff; to welcome lecturing staff and plan for the forthcoming academic year. Staff were treated to a range of health & wellbeing activities including sports, complimentary therapies, motivational talks, and awards for exceptional achievement and kickstarted our annual partner charity fundraiser by raising £1500.

Sector Committees

The College is a member of the FE Equality Co-Coordinators Forum which consists of the six further education colleges within Northern Ireland. This best practice forum meets four times per year and helps promote a consistent approach to the implementation of Section 75 within FE in Northern Ireland. Activities included:

- Five-year review of Equality Schemes; review of Audit of Inequalities; and completion of the Article 55 Review. An external provider developed an online annual Fair Employment Monitoring return for the Sector.
- Development of guidance on sector policy screening process in accordance with Equality Scheme commitments. A screening form has been agreed and shared by the forum to utilise for internal policy screening and sector policies.
- Shared Good Practice and Events including online mandatory training programmes and a commitment to raise awareness of International Women's Day in March.

- Sharing Good Practice and Events specific to disability as part of the Sector Disability Action Plan commitments – work carried out with RNIB to update the Sector recruitment portal to facilitate those with a sight difficulty/difficulty
- Partnered with Sector Learning and Development Forum to develop an online student induction programme, ensuring equality and good relations and mindfulness practices are embedded at the outset of a student's time studying with SRC.

Trauma Informed Practice

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful and potentially traumatic experiences occurring during childhood that directly harm a child or affect the environment in which they live. This can have a lasting impact into later adulthood affecting social, emotional, psychological, and physical health.

Trauma Informed Practice at SRC involves everyone within the College community including its partners, to have a basic understanding around childhood trauma and adversity and how it can affect children, young people, adults, and their families.

In line with the College's Safeguarding Policy, the College is committed to developing knowledge and understanding of Trauma Informed Practice and the impact of ACEs to help staff have a better understanding. This commitment aims to enhance and work alongside existing safeguarding protections, policies and measures for children, young people, adults at risk of harm or adults in need of protection. A key action within Tier 1 of the College's Action Plan in 2023-2024 is to become a Trauma Informed College.

In this reporting period, a working group with lecturing and support staff representation met on four occasions. An implementation plan was developed and updated quarterly, 15 adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Champions were appointed through a train the trainer approach and training was rolled out to 218 staff by the end of March 2024. The College developed a Level 3 OCN ACE qualification.

Hybrid Working Framework

Following a four-month trial of remote working, the senior management team reviewed feedback from line managers across the College. Key performance indicators included health and wellbeing, cost savings and environmental benefits. As a result, it was agreed to continue with the Remote Working Framework on a permanent basis providing the opportunity for Support Staff to work from home one day per week and to close the campus during mid-term. The Framework has provided staff an opportunity to balance work with family and private life along with encouraging more people to access employment.

Health and Wellbeing Awareness calendar

The College offered a range of health and wellbeing resources for staff. In this reporting period, the calendar was aligned to the college's Sustainability Framework and Trauma Informed Practice which included provision of awareness, support and training on domestic abuse.

Aim 5: Provision of a safe and stimulating environment

The College continues to progress with the implementation and delivery of its Estates Strategy with the aim of providing a modern physical environment that will best support the delivery of education and training across the region. The first phase of the Estate's Strategy includes an investment of nearly £100m in three new build projects in Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon and Newry.

Armagh and Banbridge
During that last reporting period, the Estates team operated and maintained the Armagh and Banbridge Campus. The team also implemented a new digital system to improve the quality and traceability of status of each work order. The BIM enabled Computer Aided Facilities management System (CAFM) is the first case study in the UK and has been an excellent innovation. The 14,000 and 4,500 square meter campuses respectively, has been carefully designed to include a modern Learning Resource Centre, integrated student social areas and Learning Support services, in addition to specialist spaces to support practical and theory-based learning in areas such as ceramics, photography, fine art, dance, music, performing arts, sport, science, hospitality, digital media, hair and beauty. Five world class construction and engineering workshops also enhance the College's STEM-focused credentials. The campus also houses a state of the art, purpose designed area which has been created to support the delivery of project-based learning (PBL). The campus' SOLVE Centre is equipped with a wide range of industry leading technology, equipment, and software. Project-Based Learning is a dynamic approach to teaching and learning, in which students explore real-world industry-based problems and challenges.

Newry
The College acquired and demolished the Newry Sports Centre and car park in 2021, located on Patrick Street, from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

The College appointed a design team and have progressed to completion RIBA ST 3 Developed Design in May 2023; consulting through the planning process with the Local Planning Authority with Planning Approval received in April 2024.

This expansion will provide increased Further and Higher Education training and skills opportunities for citizens which is welcome and positive news for everyone. The new building will greatly enhance the existing provision at the adjoining campus by significantly improving the College's curriculum provision, service delivery, student experience and equality of opportunity through improved accessibility.

This new campus development will see the regeneration of this area of Newry and will bring real economic and skills benefits into its Newry campus. The investment will support the direct delivery of high quality professional and technical education and new employment opportunities for local citizens right across the district area, which in turn will help local businesses source the skilled staff they need.

Aim 6: Increased International Links

A key strategic aim is to promote an outward and forward-looking College through the development of international links supporting staff, students, and knowledge exchange. The College recognises and values the importance of broadening the learner's experience through exposing students to different learning and cultural activities in conjunction with a range of European and Transatlantic partners.

This work promotes social inclusion and equality, proactively targeting the most disadvantaged learners while promoting cultural awareness and mutual understanding. The College has been recognised as an exemplar using international projects as a vehicle for building community relations, promoting social inclusion, integration and developing an international mind-set for learners.

The College, as lead partner on the Well Project, is responsible for the coordination and management for the project. In June 2023, the College attended the final transnational meeting in Latvia to review progress by obtaining final feedback from each partner. This meeting enabled staff to identify any issues and to guide the project in line with objectives and intellectual outputs. This was the final partnership project meeting and enabled the College to continue to build partner networks and to establish capacity building delivery to develop a range of innovative digital resources suitable for older learners across Europe. It would also enable the upskilling of staff expertise and experience in joint working for future collaboration. As this is the final partnership meeting, this enabled partners to finalise any outstanding resources.

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).
During this reporting period the College continued to monitor the actions in our Equality Improvement Plan which forms part of our Equality Scheme and the Disability Action Plan. Details of the outcomes and/or the impact of the equality action plan are set out in Section 7.

3. Has the application of the Equality Scheme commitments resulted in any changes to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2023-2024 reporting period? (tick one box only)

☐ Yes ☒ **No (go to Q.4)** ☐ Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

n/a

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):

n/a

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

n/a

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

n/a

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

n/a

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

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

☐   Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Each job description requires the post holder to ensure full compliance with College equality requirements within the context of the post.

5   **Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans 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

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

☐   Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Within the Equality Scheme timetable for measures proposed for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, objectives and targets relating to statutory duties have been integrated into the College Development Plan; Action Plans; and Human Resources and Development (HRD) Strategy. These plans continue to reflect the College's commitment to Section 75 duties and are underpinned by the Operational Plans for the relevant HRD functional areas. The Level 3 Action Plan is reported on to the Director of Client Services as part of a regular reporting routine and these documents also provide further explanation of the actions to be taken forward in the achievement of our strategic objectives.

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)*

☐   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 ongoing corporate plan

☐   No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2023-24 report

☐   Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

During this reporting period the Human Resources and Organisational Development operational plans identified a range of equality KPIs that are reported quarterly to the Staffing Committee and monthly to the Senior Management Team.

Equality action plans/measures

7   **Within the 2023-24 reporting period, please indicate the number of:**

Actions completed:	3 (a to c)	Actions ongoing:	4 (d to g)	Actions to commence:	0

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

a) <u>Monitor, review & utilise annual workforce & student data to inform policy development and marketing</u>
The College continues to monitor existing student data against courses.

b) <u>Further, embed equality and diversity into the College & Curriculum through awareness raising & promotion</u>
Equality and Diversity continues to form part of the overall induction for staff. Organisational inductions for all staff were traditionally held as a face-to-face sessions and have been delivered on-line since the Covid pandemic. In the next reporting period, the induction process will be reviewed with a view to a return to face-to-face delivery.

The College's Equality Manager has built upon the Equality Commission's online Equality Screening programme by embedding this into an online course and sharing this with Members of the Equality Working Group to adopt. The College continues to develop and embed equality across the curriculum either through specific modules or as an integral part of the curriculum delivery (as detailed in Section 1).

c) <u>Recruit a diverse student population</u>
The Marketing Team continually reviews and updates publicity materials to ensure that the College continues to promote an inclusive culture and one that is representative of the diverse range of students across Northern Ireland. This year the team undertook a new photography shoot which was cognisant of inclusion of students from a diverse background and reflected those from various racial backgrounds, genders, ages and those with disabilities. These images are used in all our printed and online communications to reflect the diverse nature of the Northern Irish society and the College student body. Full and relevant permissions are always sought for these images.

Throughout the year, the Marketing Team develops various marketing campaigns which aim to address areas of underrepresentation of the general population. For example, they undertook a campaign to promote the support services offered at the College to target especially those with learning or physical disabilities and who may not have thought College was an option for them. Working with our colleagues in student support, offline and online promotional assets were developed and distributed to all secondary schools in the local region. The aim of this campaign was to demonstrate the full range of support services offered at the College from financial support to learning support – all services which can support those with a disability to undertake a mainstream course.

Case studies of current and past students are used to promote the College courses and the student voice is used as part of the recruitment activity. Case studies are always reflective of a range of students and those from underrepresented groups. This may mean in certain subject areas where an imbalance has been identified, this is addressed. For example, using case studies of females in construction or engineering trades or males in childcare and health and social care programmes. These case studies are used in various ways; through display across college campuses, in printed communications,

online and to target parents who attend campus open days to demonstrate the breath of options for all at the College.

In the previous academic year a new College website was launched. The website was designed to AA Accessibility Standards (W3C) to ensure that the College's site is fully accessible for those who need to use assistive technology to access it. The website is also designed to be easily translated into other languages (than English) so those who live in the local community but do not have English as their first language can access course information. The imagery used on the website also reflects the inclusive College community. The Marketing team avoided stock imagery and instead used imagery of SRC students which again promotes the inclusive environment of the College.

The team seeks feedback on work undertaken throughout the year from students. This academic year the team attended Student Council meetings each semester on all campuses and listened to feedback from students on communications and recruitment activity. This provides valuable feedback from the student body; hearing from them directly and getting their opinions to adjust their approach as appropriate.

The team also works with colleagues across the sector to promote equality and diversity within the sector. There is a Communications & Marketing Collaboration Group which meets monthly and is supported by an external PR agency. This has led to the creation of a sector brand 'FE for ME'. This brand is active across local and regional media and social media channels and several sector events have been broadcast live to promote the FE message widely within Northern Ireland.

d) Further, develop student support mechanisms to reduce barriers to education and learning.

The needs of students continue to be the main priority as evidenced in one of the core College values which is "putting the learner first". Their diverse needs and concerns continue to be met by staff across the College in order to provide all staff and in particular the Learning Support Team with the knowledge, skills and confidence to ensure the needs of our learners are met. A range of activities has been carried out by the Learning Support Team as follows: -

- The College received a total Additional Support Fund allocation of £745,423 from the DfE to support students with learning difficulties and disabilities during the academic year. A total number of 739 Further Education mainstream, TFS/APPNI and discrete SLDD students received additional learning support during this period (11% increase from the previous year). Learning Support also provided additional support for 25 HE students (56% increase from previous year).
- Learning Support Co-coordinators continued to work closely with SENCOs in local secondary feeder schools to enable them to provide additional learning and exam support for students progressing to College.
- The Learning Support Team processed 781 examination access applications for students, this is an 1.3% increase from the previous year.

- A total of 77 students received counselling support from Inspire, this was a 7.23% decrease from the previous year. The total number of counselling sessions arranged was 268.
- There were a total of 35 Cause for Concerns logged which is a 24% decrease from the previous year. The Safeguarding Team received refresher training delivered by Volunteer Now and PIPs over the course of the year.
- Hosting transition working group meetings enhanced stakeholder engagement and strengthened the working relationship between SRC and external transition agencies.
- Continuing to work in collaboration with many internal and external staff in a student-centered approach to support the holistic needs of the students.

The following training was arranged specifically for Learning Support Staff:

- Supporting Autistic Students in Further Education
- JCQ Access Arrangements
- ASIST Suicide awareness
- Autism training
- Online Internet Safety training.

e) Monitor, review, and update of Disability Action Plan

The College continues to satisfy the requirement of the Level 2 Disability Confident Employer award and is committed to improving employment opportunities and career development for individuals with disabilities.

Disability Confident is a government scheme designed to encourage employers to recruit and retain individuals with disabilities and those with health conditions. The College strives to be inclusive and supports both staff and students, ultimately benefitting the organisation.

To achieve the Level 2 Disability Confident Employer status, the HRD team was required to demonstrate progression by undertaking a self-assessment process against a set of statements. The College has committed to undertake these core actions:

- Actively looking to attract and retain individuals with disabilities;
- Providing a fully inclusive and accessible recruitment process;
- Offering an interview to individuals with disabilities who meet the minimum criteria for a job;
- Flexibility when assessing people for job applicants so they are provided with an opportunity to demonstrate what they can do;
- Proactively offering and making reasonable adjustments as required;
- Encouraging our suppliers and partner firms to be Disability Confident;
- Ensuring employees have appropriate disability equality awareness;
- Promoting a culture of being disability confident;
- Supporting employees to manage their disabilities or health conditions;

- Ensuring managers are aware of how they can support staff who are sick or absent
- from work; and
- Valuing and listening to feedback from individuals with disabilities.

Further information is provided in the Disability Action Plan in Part B.

f) <u>Provide a range of Equality & Diversity training to all staff & students</u>

As at 31 March 2023, 82% of current College staff completed the Equality and Good Relations training programme. In addition, the College continues to offer a range of opportunities to attend equality and diversity training events suited to their development and/or enhancing their understanding e.g., Legal Island Conferences, Equality Commission events. During the reporting year the College engaged with the Equality Commission for advice and support for staff on a range of areas.

During the reporting period the College has continued to engage and consult with students through, for example, the Student Union (SU), student focus groups and class representatives. As a result, we have in place a range of activities and events that continue to embed through our student population as listed in the following table:-

Activity	Content	Impact
Student Focus Groups/ Student Council Meetings	1 April 2023- 31 March 2024 Range of agenda items and issues discussed including open discussion on equality and diversity issues as and when raised by Class Reps e.g., Recognition of Cultural Diversity and inequalities within the student body and hardships associated with the cost-of-living crisis. This feedback has been instrumental in successfully applying for funding to address student poverty within our college community. This funding provided all students with a free hot breakfast every day, warm clothing, and a substantial hygiene pack. In addition to this, a Christmas toy collection was arranged to help parents who are studying at the college and may be	735 students across all Campuses.

	struggling over the festive period. There is also a continued develop of a supportive environment for Autistic students. This entailed developing Autism awareness throughout the wider student body and external workshops on understanding and accepting Autistic students in the college community.	
Student Union	SRC Student Union Elections. Three LGBTQ+ officers, three Disability officers, two Cultural Diversity officers and two students were elected as Women's Officer. National Union of Students Northern Ireland (NUS USI) Regional conference- Student Union Officers attended a regional conference to have an input into NUS USI policy across Northern Ireland region including disability and equality campaigns and rights for students.	Total of 15 Student Union Elected Officers involved in developing policy and working with the Engagement team to support campaigns as part of Fresher's, LGBTQ+ awareness, International Women's Day, Sexual Health Week, Mental Health Awareness Week, Cultural Diversity Awareness Day, Time to talk day and E safety.
Clubs and Societies	Lunchtime Autism Club. The aim if the lunchtime autistic is to give Autistic students a safe and quiet space away from the sensory overload of busy lunchtimes on campus. This is open to all autistic adults and gives the opportunity to meet and socialise with other autistic people in a relaxed setting. Women's Society-	38 students engaged with this club. This club had structed, supervised activities which included team building, console gaming, workshops from external speakers and competitions.

	The purpose of this society is to give a safe space to discuss various challenges faced by women both inside and outside academia, and an opportunity to discuss how to work towards an equality of opportunity for all those who self-define partially and/or fully as women.	301 students engaged with this club. This club had structed activities which included team building, workshops from external speakers and planning of awareness initiatives.
	LGBTQ+ Society- The aim at the LGBTQ+ Society is to provide a safe and welcoming space for all SRC students who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, asexual, and/or unsure/ undecided, and for anyone who experiences any sort of homophobia, biphobia and/or transphobia.	Total of 87 students registered to be part of the LGBTQ+ society. They were involved in developing a variety such as online pub quizzes and regular talks to educate and discuss LGBTQ+ topics. This was to bring attention to the issues that they face LGBTQ+ related or not.
	Cultural Diversity and inclusion Council- A Diversity and Inclusion council provided representation from different backgrounds within the SRC to discuss diversity issues on campus and discuss initiatives on raising awareness and acceptance.	Total of 10 students registered to be part of the Cultural Diversity and inclusion Council. They were involved in the development of a Cultural Diversity workshop that is being delivered by the Student Engagement Team. They were also instrumental in the planning and delivery of the SRC Cultural Diversity Day and were successful in arranging external speakers and creating unprecedented awareness
Fresher's Fair	September 2023 Range of exhibitors attending including: Electoral office Equality Commission	Approx. 1500 students were engaged with via events on all 5 campuses with information stand from exhibitors.

	Rainbow Project Disability Action Cara Friend National Union of Students Union of Students Ireland Anti-Bullying network PSNI/ Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP)	
Consent and Healthy Relationships Programme	Range of workshops delivered to all students in all campuses. This was supported by Woman's Aid and focused on identifying and addressing signs of unhealthy relationships along with signposting to support available. In conjunction with PHA, Students completed an online healthy relationships course that was delivered via an online platform. This focused on the dangers young people can experience via social media, chatrooms etc.	This was delivered to a total of 201 students which included 131 young women. This was delivered to a total of 1331 students.
Common youth and Rainbow Project workshops on Sexual Health and Consent.	Delivered to students on all campuses that focused on sexual health and consent	This was delivered to 92 students aged 16-24 which included 44 young women.
Tutorial program	Range of classroom tutorials delivered by the Student Engagement Team raising awareness on issues such as Cultural Diversity, Bullying, Sexual Health, Homophobia and Transphobia bullying and its impact. This was delivered in partnership with Common Youth, Positive Life, and the Rainbow Project. There was also a drive on awareness raising on hate/sectarian crime as part of this	A total of 377 tutorials have been held this year with 5220 students.

	programme with the PSNI/PCSP. Tutorials also delivered on E Safety, sexual health and Healthy relationships and cultural diversity.	
Health Clinic	A Health Clinic delivered on campus providing access to sexual health services, support and advice including LGBTQ groups.	10 LGBTQ young people accessed the services.

g) Grow and enhance relations with local community groups

The FE Sector continues to support the national initiative - #GoodforMeGoodforFE campaign - which aims to help staff and students support and connect with local communities. The campaign aimed to generate £1 million of social value through a range of sustainable community actions including volunteering, fundraising, and charitable partnerships. Over 100 Colleges across the UK have already signed up to this initiative.

The campaign has 3 primary strands:
1. FE Foodbank donations;
2. Encouraging staff and student volunteering activity inside and outside the College community; and
3. Promoting and developing corporate and charitable partnerships.

FE Food donations
This academic year promotion of the on-campus foodbanks began with a Winter campaign to encourage staff to bring in food items in the run up to the festive season in December to support our local foodbanks.

This was followed by the Re-Gifting of unused Christmas gifts throughout January 2024. As a College, SRC donated 744 food items which were distributed to foodbanks within the local community by March 2024.

The Festive campaign led to the Students' Toy Appeal. Students came forward to staff to raise concerns about their financial situation meaning they would be unable to provide toys for their children on Christmas morning.

Together the College donated 76 toys and £50 worth of toy vouchers which helped 11 SRC students to provide Christmas presents for 21 children which were distributed students by mid-December 2023.

Volunteering Activities

The volunteering survey has been sent to all staff and students within the College to provide a baseline data needed to measure the impact of #GoodforMeGoodforFE over the coming year.

The impact of our volunteering is measured through a "social value calculator"; calculating the amount of volunteering hours that have been contributed in monetary terms to social goals such as increasing access to employment and skills; helping the environment; and growing businesses. So far, as a college we have captured 464 volunteering hours which is equivalent to £7465 social value generated (using the TOMS Framework 2021, 1 hour of volunteering is worth £16.09 per hour to the community).

Corporate and charitable partnerships

The College's nominated charity partner is Northern Ireland Children's Hospice. The charity support babies, children and their families through a range of children's services, which include specialist nursing care at home, supported breaks in our In-Patient Unit, end-of life care and family and bereavement support.

This year the College has organised several student and staff charity events including a Student Coffee Morning; Hospitality event; Estates World Cup Sweepstake; Handmade Christmas Cake Fundraiser; and all staff Christmas Coffee Morning which included a quiz. The College has raised over £15000 for NI Children's Hospice.

Student poverty and cost of living crises

The College has linked with foodbanks across Armagh and Down regions to provide emergency food vouchers to students and their families. These are distributed to students in need via the Student Activity Team. Personal Tutors play an important part in supporting the pastoral needs of our students and are advised that emergency food vouchers are available to students in need.

The College has provided 18 emergency food vouchers to students and 1 to a staff member.

The NI FE Sector Group is collating student poverty data within each of their colleges e.g., numbers of students receiving free dinners; number of students eligible to hardship fund and once collated will share and make recommendations on new and alternative ways in which each College could help alleviate student poverty.

Links to Curriculum

Volunteering is an excellent way in which students can develop their transversal skills and employability. The College will continue to promote and encourage student volunteering and will seek opportunities where relevant for project based learning.

h) Monitor, evaluate and review the Equality Improvement Plan

The Equality Improvement Plan was reviewed and revised in 2022, following a review of the Equality Scheme. This report reflects progress on the new actions as set out in the plan.

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)*:**

No changes made.

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)***

☒   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 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:**

This reporting period, there have been several opportunities for communicating and consulting with staff; these include: -

- Opportunities to engage and consult with staff include the following: -
- Regular Chief Executive and Senior Management Webinars and email updates continued to be held throughout the reporting period and staff had the opportunity to interact with Senior Management and post questions to them on-line;
- A Christmas coffee morning was held in December 2023 presented by the CEO and Directors across each campus;
- The use of technology using MS Teams continues to ensure managers maintain regular contact and communication with their staff through phone calls or virtual meetings.

12 **In the 2023-234 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/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation

☒ Internet discussions

☒ Telephone consultations

☐ Other *(please specify)*:

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:

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 ☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

n/a – not due for review.

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Not applicable

Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

The link to the College website https://www.src.ac.uk/the-college/equality will provide details where equality information is accessible to internal and external stakeholders.

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

> 1

One policy was screened out as there was no adverse impact identified relating to the nine equality categories: -

- Student Criminal Convictions Disclosure Policy Issue 001.

16 **Please provide the number of assessments that were consulted upon during 2023-24:**

1	Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.
0	Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented.
0	Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

NB: The College has in place a policy review schedule. The majority of policies remain unchanged or have cosmetic changes made and therefore do not require to be screened.

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

n/a

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:

n/a

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   ☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

n/a

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   ☒   Not applicable
      date

Please provide any details:

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:

n/a

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.**

Staff induction continues to provide awareness of not only our obligations under Section 75 but highlights tools available to support staff in the Employee Handbook and/or specific training.

New staff are also required to undertake mandatory Equality training in respect of Equality, Good Relations, SENDO and Safeguarding. The College continues to keep staff up to date, through its Employee Handbook, the Equality Information and Communications Support sections.

During the reporting period there has been an increase in the percentage of staff completing on-line mandatory training programmes: SENDO 89%

The College continues to promote AccessAble to promote the usage of disability access guides across all campuses.

Staff across the College have been offered the opportunity to engage in a range of training and development activities to enhance and develop their knowledge and skills in respect of supporting an inclusive College environment. Some activities would not appear to specifically address equality issues but provide awareness and information for staff to better equip them in responding to complex staff and student issues, examples such as Safe Talk, Understanding Self Harm, Mental Health Awareness, Admissions training.

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:**

n/a

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:

n/a

Section 3: Looking Forward

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

The College Equality Scheme was reviewed in 2022 and only superficial changes were made to the Scheme. It will be reviewed again in 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)*

- Policy Development and Review Schedule – policies will be reviewed in the next reporting period and staff are consulted.
- New Members of the Governing Body will receive access to the College's Mandatory online programmes in Equality and Good Relations and other areas such as Safeguarding and SENDO.

30   In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what equality and good re-lations priorities are anticipated over the next (2023-24 reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

☒   Employment

☒   Goods, facilities and services

☒   Legislative changes

☒   Organisational changes/ new functions

☐   Nothing specific, more of the same

☐   Other (please state):

PART B

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:

5	5	1
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[i]	Outcomes / Impact[ii]
National[iii]	n/a	n/a	n/a
Regional[iv]	n/a	n/a	n/a
Local[v]	n/a	n/a	n/a

[i] **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.

[ii] **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.

[iii] **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

[iv] **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

[v] **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.

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

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Introduce training for front line staff on disability etiquette and relevant legislation dealing with disability and the provision of goods, facilities and services	In the reporting period, the College's mandatory programmes had an increase in completion rates As at 31 March 2024, completion rates were as follows: - • Equality and Good Relations (89%) • SENDO (89%) • Safeguarding (89%) • Disability Awareness (88%)	Increased awareness of legislation and individual/organisation responsibilities.

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	Increase awareness of specific barriers faced by people with a disability including through linking with National Awareness days or weeks.	The College raised awareness during the reporting period by linking with National Awareness campaigns and providing information to staff on topical issues such as: Workplace Safety (September 2023); Sustainability Awareness (October 2023); Supporting Communities (November 2023); International Volunteer Day (December 2023); Dry January and Veganuary (January 2024); Time to Talk (February 2024); Domestic Abuse Awareness and International Women's Day (March 2024).	Increased awareness and understanding of barriers faced by people with a disability.
2	Promote the use of Access Able website to encourage participation of prospective students.	The Access Able website is promoted via the college website and within the application form and online recruitment platform.	Easy accessibility to Access Able website which will enable prospective students/students to view available facilities, and which will encourage participation of prospective students on a wide range of programmes of study.

		Year	User Numbers	Page Views	
		April 2023 to March 2024	1,711	2,954	
3	Create an open and inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those with mental ill health.	The College signed up to the Equality Commission's Mental Health Charter. The College continues to update its "Mind Hub" intranet page which brings together several resources to support employees and managers in looking after their emotional health and wellbeing at work.			Positive engagement, increased provision of information and monitoring.

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to 'encourage others' to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Monitor and review progress of Disability Action Plan (DAP).	Review undertaken	Evidence of progress in eleven of the twelve identified actions in the DAP.

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	n/a	n/a	n/a

PART B

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	The College will endeavor to influence DfE to ensure participation of disabled people on the Governing Body of the College.	DfE will include an affirmative action statement in recruitment advertisements to attract disabled people to apply to the Governing Body of the College.	Governing Body will include members with disabilities.	This is outside of the control of the College as recruitment is handled by the DfE.
2	Continue to encourage the participation of disabled people on committees, student representatives on the Governing Body and groups across the College.	Increased number of students with disabilities on Level 1 courses represented through the class rep system on student council supported by Learning Support Assistants.	Increased participation in student voice leading to increased participation in public life. Development of new working relationships with the following transition teams to refer disabled people to college: - Adult Learning Disability Team - Day Opportunities Forum Attendance at School Information evenings and EA Transition Evenings to raise awareness of courses on offer to transitioning students and their parents.	College will continue to identify ways of encouraging staff and students with disabilities to actively participate in groups and committees. The College will continue to engage at sector level and to share and seek good practice from across the sector ways of engaging staff and/or students with disabilities to participate.

No.	Objective	Current status	Measure	Future action
			Separate Open Days for Full time discrete provision where parents and students are invited into college premises to meet with curriculum and support staff.	College will continue to monitor the impact to ensure students with a disability are integrating into college life.
3	Encourage students with a disability to participate more fully in college life.	The College has integrated Discrete Student Groups with mainstream classes in non-curricular activities and events for example "Freshers" Week, Mental Health Awareness, and e – safety.	Increased participation in student focus groups, student surveys, Student Union Membership, and where applicable non-curricular activities such as students' union and sporting activities etc.	
4	Explore the scope of offering meaningful placements and work shadowing and volunteering for people with a disability	The College's Careers Service has formed an alliance with Disability Action who will support our students into supported employment on completion of their course through the job match programme. The College is a Disability Confident employer.	Develop capacity of people with a disability to find employment.	The College will continue to engage with disability groups to enable work placement opportunities within the College/external to the College.
5	Through Widening Participation scheme increase number of students with a disability entering the College.	As a college we believe in "putting our learners first" striving to serve the	Students have assurance through our commitment to them that we will	College will continue to review this area of work and will seek new and

	needs of our learners and to remove all barriers to learner success. The marketing of courses through the prospectus and other College documents/ references the support available for students with a disability.	prioritise their needs and support them through their learning journey, maximizing their potential.	innovative ways through which we can continue to promote accessibility to encourage prospective students with disabilities to apply.

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

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Consider development of a (Sectoral) Disability Advisory Group that could involve staff and students.	It was agreed to have the Disability Action Plan as a standing agenda item on each NI FE Equality Sector Group meeting. The six Colleges have discussed best practice around promotion of placements for students with disabilities.

PART B

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

Feedback from evaluations, consultative processes, staff and student focus groups.

(b) Quantitative

Numbers undertaking training, enrolment and recruitment and selection statistics.

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?**

No

If yes, please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1	n/a	n/a	n/a

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?**

N/A

PART B