



Supporting Learning

in Further and Higher Education
in Northern Ireland

May 2005

Preparing for SENDO 2005
A review of the systems and strategies
employed to support students with
disabilities and/or additional support need

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of students, support and administrative staff, teaching staff, learning/disability support staff, senior managers and Boards of Governors to this research.

Particular thanks must go to the Learning Support Co-ordinators who participated themselves and facilitated the participation of others as well as managing the collection of information and statistics.

Thanks are due to the Directors and Principals of the FE institutions and senior managers in the HE sector who welcomed the research and encouraged their staff to assist us.

Thanks are also due to the external organisations that took part in interviews and contributed valuable information about their experience of the FE and HE sectors.

However, we would like to confirm that the interpretation of the data and the recommendations made are entirely the responsibility of the research team.

Thanks to those people who worked as part of the research team including Roger Mullin, Paddy Rodgers, Joe Reid and Annette Morgan.

Pauline Dowd

Research Manager

ABBREVIATIONS

FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
SEND NI	Special Educational Needs Disability Order Northern Ireland
ANIC	Association of Northern Ireland Colleges
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
MLDD	Moderate Learning Difficulty/Disability
SLDD	Severe Learning Difficulty/Disability
DSA	Disabled Student Allowance
ASF	Additional Support Fund
ETI	Education & Training Inspectorate
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
FEDA	Further Education Development Agency
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
SMT	Senior Management Team
RNIB	Royal National Institute of the Blind
RNID	Royal National Institute for Deaf People
IDP	Institute Development Plan
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
IQRS	Improving Quality Raising Standards

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 Context

- 1.1 This project was commissioned by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in the autumn of 2004, to determine the nature and level of support required by the Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) Sectors in Northern Ireland in advance of the introduction of the Special Educational Needs Disability Order NI (SEND O NI), scheduled to become law in September 2005.
- 1.2 The project was led by the Belfast Institute and managed by a project team comprising senior representatives of Higher Education Institutions, Belfast Institute, Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC), Skill NI and DEL.

2 Methodology

- 2.1 The research underpinning this report was conducted during late 2004 and early 2005 and all 16 Institutes of Further Education and all 5 Higher Education Institutes in Northern Ireland participated in the research.
- 2.2 Since the aim of the project was to gain as full a picture as possible of best practice, systems and processes a range of research tools was used including:
 - Preliminary desk top review
 - Institution survey
 - Staff survey
 - Student focus groups
 - Student survey
 - Board of Governors' survey
 - Semi-structured interviewsThis facilitated the triangulation of findings.
- 2.3 Participation in the institution survey was high, with 12 of the 16 FE Institutes participating and 4 of the 5 HE Institutions. 490 staff from across the sectors contributed views to the research and a total of 250 students contributed through either focus groups or the survey.

3 Aims and Terms of Reference

- 3.1 The research aim was to identify and evaluate the effectiveness of the practices and procedures currently in place, which actively support participation of students with a disability in further and higher education.
- 3.2 The terms of reference therefore were as follows:

The Department for Employment and Learning commissioned Belfast Institute to co-ordinate a project, which will:

- Carry out a scoping study into current initial assessment practices and the arrangements for the support and development of staff across the 16 Further & Higher Education colleges and the three NI universities and, based on the findings of the study, to recommend a number of key actions.
- The scoping study will engage with the relevant colleges and institutions at a range of levels from senior managers and policy makers to staff in a variety of operational roles.
- The study will also engage with a range of learners across the institutions. The aim will be to increase awareness of learner expectation and levels of satisfaction with initial assessment and support.

The study will:

1. Identify current practice in relation to assessment and support across the different institutions and sectors taking into account a range of factors including:
 - levels of and modes of study
 - funding systems
 - geographical context
2. Identify exemplars of best practice in relation to the level of study, mode of study, funding available and geographical context.
3. Provide a critical analysis of best practice, highlighting the potential for transfer of this practice to other institutions/colleges or to other stages of the learning pathway (in the context of the learning pathway and the range of learner needs).
4. Make recommendations in relation to
 - dissemination of best practice
 - future structures and systems for staff training and support
 - funding

4 Findings

- 4.1 The percentage of the disabled students participating in mainstream provision in Further and Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ireland varies considerably. In Further Education the percentage of disabled students ranges from 1% to 4%. In HE, participation of students with a disability varies from 2% to a high of 6.8%.
- 4.2 In 2003 the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment (DETI) estimated 10.5% of the 18-30 age group had a disability and 20.5% of the population of working age had a disability.
- 4.3 All 12 of the FE Institutes participating in the Institution Survey offer discrete provision for students with MLDD or SLDD. The majority of the students on discrete programmes are enrolled on Level 0 provision with smaller numbers on Level 1 and 2 courses. There is no discrete provision in the HE sector.
- 4.4 Students with disabilities are funded using different methodologies depending on level of study. Students at HE level receive the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) while students in the FE Institutes taking courses other than at HE level are funded through the Additional Support Fund (ASF). Differences in these funding methodologies were identified as having real significance and of impacting on the overall quality of services provided to disabled students.
- 4.5 A particular shortcoming of the ASF identified is that it does not encourage nor indeed allow FE institutions to engage in forward planning.
- 4.6 The DSA funding system is considered to be a more satisfactory method of funding disability support.
- 4.7 There is a significant variation in the extent to which a whole institution approach to the inclusion of students with a disability is driven at all levels within all the organisations surveyed.
- 4.8 The research indicated that there is considerable evidence that significant investment has been made to improve physical access to educational buildings and facilities. Physical access issues therefore did not dominate student feedback. The extent to which a consistent review of accessibility is in place within the various institutions surveyed, varies with practice and is generally better in the HE sector.
- 4.9 In both the FE and HE sectors a variety of resource constraints were identified as significant. Issues varied from the availability of suitable accommodation for the service provision in FE to a need for investment in more significant staff development in HE.

- 4.10 The survey findings highlighted staff development and training as key to the success of learning support services for disabled students. In the Staff Survey 71% of support staff in FE and 55% in HE stated that they have had no training in this area for 2 years. In the Institution Survey 9 FE Institutions and 3 HE Institutions stated that they offer academic staff appropriate staff training. The fact that 43% of all staff across the FE sector and 29% across the HE sector stated that they were not aware of staff training in this area or that it was not a high priority for them was identified as a cause for major concern.
- 4.11 SENDO requires that all institutions offer multiple opportunities for students to disclose a disability. The survey showed considerable variation in the quality and availability of practices and processes around disclosure and referral. 9 FE Institutions and 4 HE Institutions stated that it is likely that some students are not identified by the current referral systems.
- 4.12 Initial assessment is widely acknowledged to be of central importance in relation to inclusion practices and this study found that this area of work was well managed in HE. Practice in the FE sector is more varied with excellent practice in some institutions and poor in others. It was found that there are no common accepted standards required of staff in relation to initial needs assessment in either sector. The survey highlights this area as one requiring urgent action to ensure a common standard of service across both the sectors.
- 4.13 Academic and support staff contributed views to the survey. Overall staff from both sectors recognised that their institution has a well managed centralised Learning Support Service. It was noted however that support staff in HE presented a very positive evaluation of services in their institutions. FE staff in general indicated a more varied and inconsistent evaluation of service in their institutions. In FE the quality of management of this service was considered by staff to have significant shortcomings in some institutions. In particular it appeared that there is a need to ensure that the role of Learning Support Co-ordinator in FE is appropriately placed in the organisation's structure and is adequately resourced.
- 4.14 SENDO requires institutions to ensure that students with a disability have appropriate access to the curriculum, assessment and student services. The survey indicates that there is still considerable work required to ensure that all disabled students receive the level of service to which they are entitled. Some 36.4% of academic staff in the FE sector expressed concerns regarding the adjustments made in the classroom to facilitate students with a disability. Responses were more positive in the HE sector with only 24.2% of all respondents sharing these concerns. The report demonstrates a clear need for both sectors to review and as appropriate enhance their services in relation to assessment and teaching and learning approaches.
- 4.15 The analysis of student views indicated that in general those studying in the HE institutions were more satisfied than those in the FE sector, with key aspects of learning support services in particular pre-entry guidance and initial assessment and induction. In a number of FE institutions key services such as initial assessment processes were considered by students to be poor or non-existent.
- 4.16 Student views also evidenced, across sectors, innovative adjustments and practices in place to support learners while on programmes of study. Student comments would suggest that good practice in this regard is in general more widespread and consistent in the HE sector than in the FE institutions.
- 4.17 In both sectors students were in general positive about the support they received and recognised the critical contribution to their success made by the Learning Support Staff in their Institution. It was notable that the frustrations they expressed were in general around issues which they believed could be addressed by some planning and increased levels of awareness across the organisation.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The report identifies significant variations in the way inclusion and learning support are addressed in the arrangements for policy, planning and management across the organisations surveyed. The HE sector was found to be more consistent in the way in which this service is managed. In FE inconsistencies regarding management and resources available for the service were of serious concern. The need for dedicated, specialist staff for this service was most frequently cited by those in FE.
- 5.2 Physical access is generally good across the sectors. Staff and students in both sectors noted significant improvements to physical access over the past 2 years.
- 5.3 Staff training on a significant scale is required to ensure that the service in both HE and FE meets the challenges presented by SENDO.
- 5.4 Quality assurance, regular review of physical access and improved networking regarding best practice were identified as key to the continued development of service.
- 5.5 The importance of providing students as service users the opportunity to contribute to service planning and review is evidenced.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 A whole institution and strategic approach is recommended which involves policy makers and funding bodies and endeavours to address the significant variations in service levels identified.
- 6.2 The programme of support which will follow this scoping exercise must employ consultancy, facilitation and training skills and should be planned to meet the particular needs of individual organisations.
- 6.3 The key areas of policy, training and awareness raising which it is recommended are urgently addressed include staff training and development, quality assurance/continuous review, funding, networking and systems and procedures for initial assessment and disclosure.

FOREWORD

Improving access to further and higher education has always been a priority for the Department for Employment and Learning. We are committed to doing everything possible to ensure that all students, including those with a disability, are treated fairly.

The focus on access for students with disabilities has intensified following the introduction of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order, which is due to become operational in September 2005. This will give comprehensive rights to students with disabilities, in particular the right to have access to further and higher education on an equal basis as those who do not have disabilities. Complying with the requirements of this legislation will pose a significant challenge to all of us who are involved in, or with, the further and higher education sectors, but it is a challenge that must be addressed.

This research report represents the first step in identifying and addressing gaps in staff training, systems, processes and procedures. It will help ensure that all of those involved in further and higher education have the necessary skills and knowledge to meet their legal obligations, as well as the needs and expectations of individual students.

Belfast Institute is to be congratulated for taking this project forward. By using the expertise available in its Centre for Applied Research and Development and its award winning Centre for Inclusive Learning, and by harnessing the know-how available in other organisations, it has highlighted a range of issues to be addressed. I am grateful to everyone who participated in the research and in particular to the members of the Advisory Board.

We in the Department will fully support the future development of the project. The development of good practice and its dissemination can only be to the benefit of us all and help ensure that we are providing a consistent, quality service to all our students.

Will Haire

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) has commissioned Belfast Institute to co-ordinate a project, which will:

- Carry out a scoping study into current initial assessment practices and the arrangements for the support and development of staff across the 16 Further & Higher Education colleges and the three NI universities and, based on the findings of the study, to recommend a number of key actions.
- The scoping study will engage with the relevant colleges and institutions at a range of levels from senior managers and policy makers to staff in a variety of operational roles.
- The study will also engage with a range of learners across the institutions. The aim will be to increase awareness of learner expectation and levels of satisfaction with initial assessment and support.

The study will:

1. Identify current practice in relation to assessment and support across the different institutions and sectors taking into account a range of factors including:
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2. Identify exemplars of best practice in relation to the level of study, mode of study, funding available and geographical context.
3. Provide a critical analysis of best practice, highlighting the potential for transfer of this practice to other institutions/colleges or to other stages of the learning pathway (in the context of the learning pathway and the range of learner needs).
4. Make recommendations in relation to
 - dissemination of best practice
 - future structures and systems for staff training and support
 - funding

INTRODUCTION

This report was commissioned by DEL. The report was written by the Research Manager in the Centre for Applied Research and Development at the Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education. Its broad aim is to review the further and higher education institutions within Northern Ireland, in relation to matters of relevance to the forthcoming Special Education Needs Disability Order (SENDO).

The report aims to provide baseline details that will assist in planning for the support of institutions as they prepare for the implications of the SENDO legislation.

Data Dissemination

The report presents data primarily disaggregated into two sectors: Further Education Institutions and Higher Education Institutions. However, each individual institution will in addition to this report, also receive a report on staff views relating to their institution. This will allow them to locate their institution in relation to the average for their sector as a whole.

Report Structure

The report provides separate chapters dealing with the results of an initial desk-top review, an institutional review, a staff survey of opinion, and finally students' views as presented in focus groups and via a student questionnaire.

Other data collected via a Board of Governors' questionnaire and by interview with external specialist organisations and other experts, has been incorporated into one or other of the above chapters.

Reflections on Findings

As will be noted, the report details a range of significant differences between the further and higher education sectors. However, the evidence presented confirms that both sectors have some distance to travel before they can confidently claim to be fully prepared for the implications of the SENDO legislation.

To assist in the continuous process of preparing to meet the needs of both students and legislation, we have produced a detailed set of conclusions, and a related set of recommendations.

Report definitions

Throughout this report, we have used terms that require some initial definition or explanation, to avoid interpretation problems. These are listed below.

- Although a small number of FE institutes refer to their most senior managers as the Principal and the Vice Principal to ensure anonymity for those completing the institution questionnaire we have chosen to use the terms Director and Assistant Director for all institutions.
- The HE sector comprises Queen's University Belfast, the University of Ulster, the Open University and St. Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College both of which, although independent and operating from different campuses, are affiliated to Queen's University Belfast.
- The forthcoming SENDO legislation uses the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) definition of disability. In this Act a 'disabled person' is defined as:
"...someone who has a physical or mental impairment, which has an effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This effect must be substantial and long-term and adverse."
- In the FE sector the term 'learning support' is used to describe the support given to students with a disability while in the HE sector the term 'disability support' is used. Throughout this report the term 'learning/disability support' is used to describe this service across both sectors.
- The term "support staff" includes administrative staff, front of house staff, care-takers, canteen staff and learning support staff.

Included in the detail of this definition is the term "learning disability" so throughout this study we will use the term 'disability' to include learning disability.

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to satisfy the need for triangulation¹. That is, for all major areas of investigation we used a range of research methods to ensure we did not rely solely on one data collection method. This is reflected in many of the report sections where, for example, we draw upon survey and focus group session findings in discussing key issues.

The study involved the following methods of investigation.

Preliminary Desktop Review

The desktop review spanned a range of research documents relating to earlier evaluation studies in the FE or HE sectors and other significant reports in this area including materials from the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). It also traced legislative developments. The reader will find this referenced in the footnotes. The desktop review raised a series of issues which were subsequently incorporated within our primary research.

Institute Survey

All 16 FE institutions and all 5 HE institutions were invited to complete an institutional questionnaire. 12 FE institutes and 4 HE institutes completed the questionnaire. The aim of the questionnaire was to collect both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the scale of engagement of the FE and HE sectors with people with a disability as well as the issues of planning, management, accessibility, resourcing, initial needs assessment, assessment methods and networking and communication. The questionnaire was completed by the Learning Support Co-ordinator in each FE institution and by a manager in the disability support service in the HE sector with other staff providing information or statistics as required.

The Open University opted not to complete the questionnaire as they felt that much of the data requested was not applicable to their circumstance which is mainly distance learning, and they chose to contribute to this section of the research via an interview with the Assistant Director who is also represented on the Advisory Group.

Staff Survey

The staff survey aimed to capture perceptions of both academic and support staff regarding their institution's response to students with a disability. This survey was conducted in all of the 16 FE institutions and 4 of the 5 HE institutions.

This survey invited participants to comment on areas such as staff training, working with students, institutional strengths and weaknesses with regard to supporting students with a disability as well as barriers to access and recent improvements.

Each FE institution involved in this section of the research was visited by the research team to offer a drop-in support session where staff could clarify questions, get assistance with completing the questionnaire or make additional comments about issues not raised by the questionnaire or the research in general. The HE sector did not request this support. All staff participating were also given the opportunity to contact the research manager directly to discuss the research. Overall 989 questionnaires were issued to staff and resulted in a return rate of just under 50%.

Student Focus Groups

The purpose of the focus groups was to collect qualitative data outlining the individual experience of students enrolled at the institution, and receiving support from the learning/disability support centre. A sample of students with a range of disabilities across campuses and across a variety of academic departments was selected by the Learning Support Co-ordinator or disability services manager. 194 students participated in the focus group sessions.

¹ See Hall D. and Hall I. (1996) *Practical Social Research* (London: Macmillan) pp44-45 for a discussion on the advantages of triangulation in social research.

Student Survey

It was not possible to carry out focus groups in 4 of the 5 HE institutions and in 1 of the FE institutions for a variety of reasons. To ensure that students from these institutions had the opportunity to make a contribution to the research we distributed a short questionnaire to a sample of students with a range of disabilities across campuses and across a variety of academic departments. The sample was selected by the Learning Support Co-ordinator or the Disability Support Manager but the responses came back directly to the research team. A total of 56 students responded to the student survey.

Board of Governors' Survey

A short survey was issued to Directors of FE Institutions and to the representative on the Advisory Board of HE institutions for completion by a member of their Board of Governors. Responses included 7 FE institutions and 1 HE institution.

Semi-structured Interviews

A series of semi-structured interviews were held with representatives from a variety of external organisations providing a service to people with a disability, this included RNIB, RNID, MENCAP, the British Dyslexia Association and the Cedar Foundation. They provided an overview of their organisation's experience of engaging with the FE and HE sectors to enable people with a disability to be supported in their learning.

Some members of the Advisory Group were interviewed individually to allow them to contribute their views and experience to the research. Reflective comment was also sought from a number of people with experience of research and an interest in the development of institutional responses towards students. To encourage free expression, interviews were held on a confidential basis, and therefore we do not list the specific individuals from whom advice or comment was sought.

Summary of Participation Rates

Table 1: The scale of participation in the study.

Research Activity	Participant Numbers
Institute Survey	12 FE 4HE
Staff Survey	490
Student Focus Groups	31 (194 participants)
Student Survey	56
Board of Governors Survey	8
Interviews	15

CONTEXT SETTING

Introduction

The increased inclusion of adults with disabilities in mainstream society has presented major challenges for the providers of adult education and it is fair to say that the Further and Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ireland have made significant progress in ensuring that disabled students have access to the full range of learning programmes on offer. It can now reasonably be argued that this process of 'inclusion' has greatly enriched the adult education environment in our colleges and universities for all students and staff.

It now is widely recognised that disabled people's restricted participation in society is a socially created barrier - not the result of physical limitations or impairments. The increasing removal of physical access barriers must however be accompanied by a sustained reflective regard for the other less tangible barriers to inclusion which prevent access to the curriculum and a meaningful engagement with a learning process which is obstacle free in terms of delivery and assessment. The challenge now for providers of adult education is to address a key concept integral to full inclusion i.e. that one size does not, and has not fitted all irrespective of whether or not the student has a disability. Do we fully understand the key role which Information Learning Technology (ILT) has to play in opening up the curriculum for all our students? Are we aware of the advances in adaptive and enabling technology which can make such a valuable contribution to supporting our students with disabilities? Are we aware of the skills which are required to provide a first class service to our clients with a disability, to deliver excellence in teaching and learning to all our students? Are we proactive in ensuring that all staff are given opportunities to buy into the culture necessary to underpin inclusion?

This research addresses the following question: How far down the road are the main adult education providers in Northern Ireland towards a whole institution strategic approach which will ensure equity of access to all our services for adults with a disability? What represents best practice in both the Higher and Further Education sectors?

'The development of the colleges to meet the needs of the people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not just about making buildings more accessible and providing specialist equipment - it is about creating appropriate learning environments which are able to meet the individual needs of all students. FEDA research into good practice in colleges confirms the importance of working on three inter-related themes: organisational, staff and curriculum developments.'²

The impending introduction of the SENDO legislation makes this an important and challenging time for the sector. To meet the challenge, visionary leadership is required to create a culture which welcomes diversity; a culture underpinned by commitment and enthusiasm from Governors, Senior Managers and all institution staff.

Disabled adult students, until relatively recently perceived of as being incapable of benefiting from education, now expect and are supported by legislation to take a meaningful place in the workforce and make a positive contribution to mainstream society.

It is useful at this point to briefly review the historical background to the current policy regarding inclusion. The 1950s saw special schools and special care schools grow in number and although they offered an educational opportunity to young people such education was experienced in a segregated setting with children often having to travel long distances to schools, thus also depriving them of the experience of growing up alongside other children in their neighbourhoods.

The sixties and seventies witnessed a move towards community care but this was still largely institutionalised with the interests of the professional in mind rather than the people in care.

2 FEDA, *Inclusive colleges – building on current practice in inclusive learning* (1988)

It is also worth noting that the 'problem' of disabled people was defined by non-disabled people who by extension had control over the situation. A seminal period in the process of re-defining disability and challenging the dominant climate of ideas appears to have reached a key stage in Britain during the seventies with the emergence of new thinking and new organisations controlled by disabled people themselves and indeed the seventies and eighties saw several reports and acts published on segregated care and education for disabled people e.g. the Warnock Report (1978)³ on special educational needs. Since the early 1980s the trend has been to try to include as many children as possible in mainstream education.

People with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have therefore won recognition of their right to have access to the same services and facilities that are available to other members of the community and the same options in relation to housing, transport, work, education and social and recreational activities. For the Further and Higher Education Sectors a significant development was the establishment by the FEFC (in England) of an independent committee chaired by Professor John Tomlinson to examine provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As part of the Committee's work the FEFC commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies at the University of Sussex to carry out a mapping exercise on the provision for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the post-16 population: to estimate the numbers of these students participating in further education: and to estimate the level of unmet need.

'The immediate purpose of this report is to improve educational opportunities for those people already enrolled in further education colleges and to extend further education to 'the thousands now not included'. Central to the approach of this report is the idea of inclusive learning.'

'Mainstreaming' is now a standard feature of policy at national and local levels within compulsory and post 16 education, with the impending Special Educational Needs and Disability Order due for implementation in September 2005, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is in effect extended to cover education and attention is now focussed on the provision of services within further and higher education throughout Northern Ireland.

Over the years Northern Ireland has witnessed many educational initiatives such as Learning Works - Widening Participation (the Kennedy Report)⁴ aimed to encourage previously under-represented groups to enter further or higher education. The participation of students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties within both sectors was also greatly enhanced by the advent of The Disabled Students' Allowance (1990: HE Designated Courses) and the Additional Support Fund (1998: FE Designated Courses).

Since the mid-1980s, further education institutions have been by far the largest providers of adult education in Britain. In particular, as the mass provider of education and training for adults, FE institutions have become a major second chance route for the disadvantaged.

In short, this research is aimed at identifying the presence of practices and procedures which actively support participation among those who have traditionally been somewhat excluded from further and higher education; adult students with a disability.

Similarly, the mechanisms and processes through which adult students with a disability become engaged in learning often involves the complex interaction of a number of factors, rather than any single factor or planned decision-making process. Inclusion requires a whole institution strategic approach which:

- values all learners and staff
- is 'bought into' by all staff and is adequately resourced
- puts the learner at the centre of all institution procedures, provision and functions
- is consistently monitored and valued by management and staff alike

3 Department of Education and Science (1978) *Special Educational Needs (Warnock Report)* London HMSO.

4 Helena Kennedy QC *Learning Works: Widening Participation in Further Education, FEFC; June 1997*

- fosters reflective teaching strategies and excellence in practice supported by effective staff development
- is professional, transparent and equitable in its standards of service to students with a disability throughout the institutions full range of provision
- acknowledges and values diversity

'Inclusive Learning is a way of thinking about further education that uses a revitalised understanding of learning and the learner's requirement as its starting-point. What the teacher does, what the college does, and what the sector does should be informed and shaped by this understanding. The aim is not for students to simply 'take part' in further education but to be actively included and fully engaged in their learning. At the heart of our thinking lies the idea of 'match' or 'fit' between how the learner learns best, what they need and what they want to learn, and what is required from the sector, a college and teachers for successful learning to take place. By 'inclusive learning' therefore, we mean the greatest degree of match or fit between the individual learner's requirements and the provision that is made for them.' (Tomlinson: 1996)⁵

The Further Education Inter-Board Curriculum Development Project, which reported in 1997, conducted research in twelve of the FE institutions in Northern Ireland. The results indicated that there was evidence of good practice throughout the sector with many of the institutions endeavouring to meet the learning and support needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

'Considerable good practice has become evident from which much can be learned. This good practice can be built upon in the establishment of the new systems and structures which are required to support an expansion of the opportunities and choice made available within the further education sector to students with a disability.'⁶

Given that what we are trying to identify within this scoping study is institution wide in its process and complex in its implementation and procedures, the value of this study lies in the fact that it should be seen as complementary to and building upon the 'good practice' which was recognised within the Inter-Board Publication. Furthermore, this scoping exercise continues to ask the key question in relation to access to further and higher education: how effective are we as providers of further and/or higher education in ensuring that the services we offer are open to, and accessible to students with a disability? How successful have we been, what do we need to do and how far have we to go to create '...an appropriate educational environment;... understanding better how people learn so that they can better be helped to learn; and see people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties first and foremost as learners.' (Tomlinson: 1996)

In scoping a response to this question we should gain an insight into how effective we are as providers in offering a personalised learning experience for all our students. The Terms of Reference not only reflect the complexity of this scoping study but are in themselves also testimony to the commitment of the further and higher education sectors to meet the challenges of including students with a disability within mainstream educational provision. We note however that with the agreement of the advisory group we have moved beyond the initial terms of reference⁷ in some areas of the study.

Relevant Legislation

- The Community Care (NI) Order 1990
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Children (NI) Order 1995
- The Education (NI) Order 1996
- The Further Education (NI) Order 1997

5 Further Education Funding Council (1996) *Inclusive Learning (Report of the Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Committee, chaired by Professor John Tomlinson)*. London: HMSO.

6 As cited in DENI *Support for students with learning difficulties and/or Disabilities. A good practice guide for Colleges of Further and Higher Education 1998* p.5

7 See page 14

- The Education (NI) Order 1998
- NI Act 1998 Section 75 requires public authorities carrying out functions that relate to Northern Ireland to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity between: persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, men and women generally, persons with a disability and persons without and persons with dependants and persons without.
- SENDO: Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (September 2005)

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reports on the results of an institutional survey. Twelve of the 16 Further Education institutions and 4 of the 5 Higher Education institutions from whom responses were sought took part in this element of the research. The questionnaires were completed by the Learning Support Co-ordinator in each FE institution. In the HE sector the questionnaire was completed by a manager of the disability support service. The findings presented in this chapter therefore relate only to those institutions who responded.

We wish to note that some institutions were unable to source data to enable them to answer some of the questions. This seems to suggest that some institutions may lack the necessary information base to engage in fully effective forward planning.

Scale of Engagement

Introduction

Enrolments in FE institutions range from approximately 6,100 to approximately 40,000 and include students across the working age spectrum and beyond. In 2003 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)⁸ estimated that approximately 20.5% of people of working age across Northern Ireland had a disability. In 3 FE institutions less than 1% of their student population are receiving support for a disability. In 6 FE institutions between 1.5% and 2% of the student population are receiving support for a disability. In the final 3 institutions between 2.5% and 4% of the student population are receiving support for a disability.

Enrolments at the 2 other universities in Northern Ireland is approximately 22,000 and approximately 24,000. Enrolments at the 2 university colleges are approximately 1,000 and 1,100. A large proportion of the students enrolled in these 4 HE institutions are aged 18-30. The rate of disability for this age group given by DETI⁹ in 2003 is 10.5%. In this sector (not the Open University) approximately 2% of the student population in each institution are receiving support for a disability.

While numbers of students with a disability being supported across both sectors are below the national rate of disability it is important to note that some students declare their disability but do not require support.

Enrolment at the Open University in Northern Ireland is approximately 3,750 with an engagement rate of 6.8% for students with a disability.

In the Open University 56% of their students with a disability are managing multiple disabilities. In the rest of the HE sector the rate is 2.5% and in the FE sector the rate of disabled students managing multiple disabilities is 3%. 30% of disabled students in the Open University are managing a mental health condition and more than 4/5 of these students are managing multiple disabilities. In the FE sector 4.4% of students with a disability are managing a mental health issue and 7.4% of disabled students in the rest of the HE are managing a mental health issue.

Although still below the national rate of disability, the Open University has more than 3 times the rate of enrolments of students with a disability than any other HE institution. The structure and support systems at the Open University obviously facilitate people with certain disabilities as the courses are normally completed via distance learning and students study at a time which suits them.

⁸ Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment; Labour Force Survey. Autumn 2003. See www.equality.nisra.gov.uk

⁹ As above

Discrete Provision

All 12 FE institutions offer discrete provision for students with a disability although not all of these institutions provided exact full-time and part-time figures. Numbers of full-time students in individual institutions, ranged from 20-81 while part-time numbers ranged from 19-577, with 6 institutions having 100 or more part-time students on discrete provision. Discrete provision is not offered at HE institutions.

- 1309 students are enrolled part-time on discrete provision across 10 institutions
- 305 students are enrolled full-time in discrete provision across 6 institutions.

Available data regarding students on discrete provision and their level of study, regardless of mode of attendance indicates that 82% of students on discrete provision are studying at level 0, 12% at level 1 and 6% at level 2. There are no students in discrete provision currently studying above level 2.

Funding Mechanisms

In the FE sector 55% of students with a disability are funded by ASF or DSA, 42% are funded by enhanced FTE funding and 3% are funded from other sources. In the HE sector 96% of students with a disability are funded through DSA and 4% are funded from other sources.

In terms of the impact of the current funding formula on development of provision for students with a disability, 7 institutions stated that they could now work with smaller groups or on a one-to-one basis or that it had enhanced the development of the provision and allowed for the funding of more appropriately qualified staff. Two institutions would like the funding to be extended to support 14-19 year olds on school links provision. One institution stated that ASF should be for additional support, not instead of and another felt that the current system does not allow for forward planning.

In the HE sector 1 institution felt that the current system allows for a vast amount of work to be done but that it should be paid per capita not only for students in receipt of DSA. Another HE institution pointed out that as funding follows the student it is difficult to develop centralised resources.

Institutions were given the opportunity to make suggestions about what adjustments to the current funding formula might improve their provision. Two FE institutions suggested that there should be one funding formula for all with funding following the student. Two institutions as suggested earlier would wish the ASF to support the funding of their school 14-19 programme. One institution suggested specific funding for care needs, another suggested that a reduction in waiting time between enrolment and the arrival of funding would improve the service. Finally one institution expressed concern that the strict interpretation of rules by management means that some students with undeclared mental health issues miss out.

In the HE sector there were concerns that DSA is rarely sufficient to cover support costs for profoundly deaf students. The RNID certainly see lack of funding as one of the main barriers to students with a hearing impairment beginning or completing a course. It was also suggested in the HE sector that an increase in the numbers of disabled students should be reflected by an increase in the amount of funding. There was also a feeling that premium funding must be secured and a concern about variable fees and the contribution to widening participation which impinges upon premium funding. In general external organisations expressed the view, in interviews, that the HE sector was better funded in the area of learning/disability support than the FE sector and they were therefore more able to provide a more comprehensive service across the sector.

Policy and Planning

The forthcoming SENDO legislation's¹⁰ underlying principle is that:

“Disabled people should have the same opportunities as non-disabled people to benefit wherever possible from whatever education or other related provision is available.”

If an institution is to comply with this legislation and develop a culture of inclusive learning it will require the engagement of a range of senior staff across the institution including senior management, estate management, and with oversight provided by the Board of Governors within both the FE and HE sectors. One indication of the involvement of such senior staff, is the extent to which reference is made to inclusive learning/disability support in key strategic and operational documentation such as the Institute Development Plan (IDP), estate strategy, and the existence of a clear disability statement.

In addition, if the institution is to comply with the legislation, staff must be sufficiently well informed and skilled in order to support inclusive practice. In a later chapter we review in detail staff perceptions, although we make some reference to these in the course of reviewing the data emanating from the institutional survey.

Seven FE institutions make reference to provision for students with a disability in all strategic planning and operational documentation. These include the institution development plan, the estates strategy, the student charter, marketing materials, the prospectus, enrolment documentation, quality assurance documentation and staff induction materials. The remaining 5 FE institutes made reference to provision on a selection of these documents. Four FE institutions also make reference to this provision in staff briefing documentation, and this reference is also made in evacuation procedure documentation, on the website and in the student handbook by several other institutions.

All of the HE institutions make reference to provision for disability support in their estates strategy, in their prospectus, on enrolment documentation and on staff induction materials. Three of the 4 HE institutions also make reference to this provision in their institution development plan, in their quality assurance documentation and on staff briefing documentation. All of the responding HE institutions, but only 10 of the 12 FE institutions, have a disability statement.

The influences on the formulation of the sections of the institution strategic plan relating to supporting students with a disability are arguably important. The disability section of the current strategic plan of 7 FE and 2 HE institutions was formulated after seeking advice from disability specialists within their institution. In 2 FE institutions the strategic plan was written after taking account of formal reviews or audits of provision. One FE institution and 2 HE institutions agreed that their strategic plan was formulated following specialist advice and formal reviews and audits of provision. In 1 FE institution their current strategic plan was not informed by either specialist opinion or formal reviews.

As is reported in the later chapter dealing with staff perceptions, some 27% of FE staff and 35% of HE staff stated that either management ensures that good practice is adopted throughout the organisation or that their organisation gives a high priority in its future planning to the needs of students with a disability. Thus, although the majority of institutions have included statements within high level policy and planning documents, there is still some distance to be travelled to ensure staff are both aware of the requirements and aware of how they are to be turned into practice on the ground.

10 SENDO (forthcoming, September 2005)

Of the 8 questionnaires returned by institutions' Boards of Governors, 7 stated that learning/disability support is given high priority in their Institute Development Plan, the other institution currently gives this moderate priority but expects it to become high priority quickly with the pending SENDO legislation. In relation to whether or not the implications of the SENDO legislation have been considered by the Education Committee or the Board of Governors, 6 respondents stated that this matter was currently on the agenda, the other 2 institutions explained that this matter is not yet on the agenda.

All of the FE institutions that returned a Board of Governors questionnaire outlined their perceived implications of the SENDO legislation. There was no input from the HE sector on this question. One FE institution stated that this legislation will require them to make available costly additional resources and it may increase their risk of legal costs. All of the remaining FE institutions were very positive about the implications of the SENDO legislation. They welcomed the opportunity to further embed their commitment to inclusiveness, they saw it as an opportunity for all students to develop a respect for and understanding of diversity and for staff to make reasonable adjustments to facilitate inclusion. Institutions listed systems, procedures and practices which would be affected by the necessary increased resourcing in the area. This included staff development, marketing, admissions procedures, disclosure issues, providing a code of practice for staff as well as the employment of more specialist staff.

Evidence from the institution questionnaires and the Board of Governors' questionnaires would indicate that the senior staff and Boards of Governors in most FE and HE institutions have engaged with the process of learning/disability support, involving other staff as necessary. This is some indication of the degree of importance given to this area at a strategic level and is crucial as decisions regarding resourcing and staffing are also made at this level.

Sixteen percent of FE staff and 13.5% of HE staff indicated that staff with expertise in the area of disability contribute to future planning in their department and 11% of FE staff and 18% of HE staff stated that their organisation includes the disability support department in the forward planning of disability policies. These figures indicate best practice in 2 significant areas of consultation, in the future planning within departments and in the forward planning of disability policies. It is a matter of some concern that 2 FE institutions do not have a disability statement and the strategic plan of one institution is not informed by specialist opinion or formal reviews or audits of provision. It is important to recognise that if a person is prevented from becoming a student because of the policies, procedures and practices of an institution, they are being discriminated against, and the institution is failing to comply with legislative requirements.

External organisations expressed their opinion on policy and planning, the RNIB felt that the FE sector is not planning strategically for students with a visual impairment in mind. There was also concern expressed by MENCAP that FE had moved and was now primarily concerned with making provision to suit businesses and to meet economic need and that this was having a negative effect on provision for students with a disability as they do not always fit neatly into this plan.

It seems reasonable to conclude that support needs to be provided to some institutions in order to ensure their policies and strategies fully comply with forthcoming SENDO legislation. Given this reflects the position of those institutions that responded to the institutional review, it will be necessary to review all policy and strategy documents of non-respondents during the intervention stage of this project.

Management of Service

The direct line management of inclusive learning support is crucial to its success, and the investment in staff to do this is an indication of the level of importance placed on this area by senior management. Our research makes it very clear that the demands placed on the Learning Support Co-ordinators in the FE sector are numerous, time-consuming and crucial to the

success of development in this area. In the HE sector it would seem that there is often a clearly defined team with processes and procedure in place to support students with a disability, this is not the case in the FE sector.

Enrolments in FE institutions range from approximately 6,100 to approximately 40,000 including full-time, part-time and short course students. Most FE institutions have more than one campus and some have numerous out-centres used for evening classes. This presents a huge challenge to the learning support teams in terms of communicating information to all students regardless of their mode of attendance or location. Declaration of disability in the FE sector tends to be late August or early September in the vast majority of cases as students enrol or apply for courses. This again has implications for the level and quality of provision during this period of each academic year.

Furthermore, in the FE sector there is a much greater variety of levels of courses and of duration than is the case in the HE sector. This again adds to the complexity of operations, and to the difficulty of ensuring all students with needs are properly identified and supported.

Given the complexity of FE sector provision, it might have been expected that the sector would have put clearer and more robust procedures in place than the HE sector. This does not appear to be the case.

The Open University has a student population in Northern Ireland of 3,750, 6.8% of which are being supported for a disability or an additional requirement. This higher percentage might reflect the structure of the Open University system which allows students to study at home and at a time which suits them. The Open University also faces challenges in terms of locations and declaration of disability at enrolment time.

In the rest of the HE sector the numbers of students in the 2 universities is approximately 22,000 and 24,000 and in the university colleges the enrolment figures are 1,000 and 1,100 approximately. The rate of disability is approximately 2% in each of the 4 HE institutions. Provision is predominantly on a full-time basis but there is substantial part-time provision in some of these institutions. The 2 universities also make use of numerous sites and out-centres and have a similar challenge to the FE sector in terms of communication with all students. The HE sector, however, does have the advantage of full-time students declaring their disability on UCAS forms which facilitates the organisation of support as early as the February before a September start.

The status of the Learning Support Co-ordinator or day-to-day manager of disability services in HE and the time allocation afforded to this role are clear indicators of the extent of the investment in the inclusion process by institutions. Another indicator of this commitment is the actual involvement of senior managers on an on-going basis monitoring and reviewing the service with the team and supporting changes and developments as the need arises.

All 12 FE institutions and 3 HE institutions have a designated member of staff responsible for the day-to-day management of support services for students with a disability. However, not all designated staff operate in a full-time capacity. In 5 FE institutions and the 3 HE institutions the member of staff is full-time, but in 6 of the FE institutions responding the member of staff is employed on a part-time basis with hours ranging from 0 to 20 per week. Thus the HE sector is more consistent in providing full-time management of learning/disability support services.

In most cases the manager within the FE sector is either a lecturer or a senior lecturer although in one case the manager is a Head of Department and in 2 cases the manager is an administrator. In June 2002 SkillNI, in a report commissioned by DEL,¹¹ expressed concern regarding the role and status of the Learning Support Co-ordinator.

11 SkillNI *The Social and political context: Policy and procedures for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities DEL 2002*

In the HE sector the staff member managing the learning/disability support service is a Head of Department, a senior tutor or an academic related member of staff. Thus the HE sector is more consistent in locating the management of the service within the academic community.

In 9 of the FE institutions members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) are involved in the support of students with a disability. Two institutions outlined the commitment of their SMT by the inclusion of disability support in the corporate strategy, business plan and IDP targets as well as the resourcing of physical access improvements and enabling technology. In the other FE institutions, the involvement of the senior management team is not on an on-going basis and financial support is less obvious. In 1 institution the senior management do not play an active role, in another their involvement is ad hoc and only in response to serious difficulties with no other formal regular input.

In all 4 HE institutions at least 1 member of the SMT takes an active role in the learning/disability support service. Two institutions outlined very clear structures and roles and explained how the SMT work together with other staff on committees and working groups to address issues and oversee learning/disability support provision.

Although there is evidence that the Senior Management Team of each institution is involved in the area of learning/disability support, this involvement is not at a consistent level within and across sectors.

It is a matter of particular concern that several Learning Support Co-ordinators in the FE sector carry out a lengthy list of duties with only a small number of dedicated hours or in their other duty time only. It is also a concern that in 2 FE institutions the day-to-day manager is not professionally trained in this specialist area. The refurbishment of existing buildings as well as the provision in new purpose built accommodation indicates that major financial investments are being made. However, 2 FE institutions did indicate that their Senior Managers did not yet see learning/disability support as a priority and were reacting to issues rather than planning strategically.

In the HE sector the management of this area seems to be well organised, with adequate hours and with important support and involvement from the Senior Management Team. Of course, there is a continuing need to regularly review provision and adjust staff levels as the service evolves and progresses. But from the results of this survey it is clear the HE sector has a more consistent and strategic response than the FE sector to the management of services for students with a disability.

Physical Accessibility

Physical access to a building and to the services within that building, is crucial if students with a disability are to participate on an equal footing with non-disabled students. Access issues such as lack of ramps, lifts, car parking, adapted toilets and brailled signage or documents available in a variety of formats was one of the most significant barriers to student participation according to 21% of FE staff and 15% of HE staff. In both sectors a significant number of staff (FE 31% and HE 24%) stated that some parts of their buildings are not accessible to those with physical disabilities. Twenty seven percent of FE staff and 25% of HE staff felt that the situation in their institution was better than this with access and related issues being well co-ordinated throughout the organisation.

It became clear during institution visits and from input from students, that major steps have been taken to improve physical accessibility. With refurbishment and new build programmes currently on-going in 5 FE and 1 HE institution, the issue of steps, unsuitable toilets and heavy doors have been or are being addressed in order to raise them to at least minimum building control regulations standards. There is also evidence that such changes have been made in existing buildings and in some out centres and that HE institutions are making adjustments in line with the strict requirements of existing listed buildings. The RNIB, however, believe that there has been

a lack of physical changes to aid the access into and around buildings for the visually impaired in both the FE and HE sectors and that an institution audit would clearly identify this problem.

All 12 FE institutions and all 4 HE institutions stated that their libraries and resource centres are suitable for access by students with a physical disability. Eleven of the 12 FE institutions and all 4 HE institutions stated that student services facilities such as canteens and students' unions are suitable for access by students with a physical disability. Nine of the 12 FE institutions and 2 of the HE institutions stated that they have appropriate signage in buildings to facilitate students with a visual impairment.

These improvements are obvious and measurable and people quite rightly expect them to be in place. In discussions with students about their most pressing needs, access issues are rarely mentioned. Their most pressing needs usually concern teaching, learning and assessment. When students did raise access issues it was usually in relation to bad practice such as electronic doors being switched off, lifts being out of order for lengthy periods or the storage of cleaning materials in disabled toilets, all of which are very frustrating to students and render the numerous and often expensive adaptations pointless. As is also revealed in the chapter dealing with staff perceptions, 75% of FE staff and 71% of HE staff have noticed improvements in physical access issues over the past 2 years.

To support the adjustments which have been made to improve physical access, an efficient system of reviewing facilities and reporting problems needs to be in place for optimum results. In 7 FE institutions accessibility issues are reported directly to the Learning Support Co-ordinator. Other avenues of reporting include the use of the complaints procedure, the use of customer comment cards or reporting directly to some other appropriate member of staff.

In the HE sector reporting is done via the Director of Student Services, a senior student affairs tutor or disability services staff and access issues are reviewed annually usually involving estates and student affairs and a member of the disability support team.

However, only nine FE institutions indicated that they review access facilities on an annual basis while 1 FE institution indicated that each complaint of this nature is followed up immediately. The Learning Support Co-ordinator leads this review process in 4 institutions, Deputy Directors manage this process in 4 other institutions while the student services committee carry out this review in another FE institution.

As well as being able to access a building and its facilities, students with a disability also need to be able to safely evacuate the building in an emergency. All 12 FE institutions and 2 of the 4 HE institutions have specific evacuation procedures for students with a disability. Some institutions make use of chairs specifically designed for the purpose, others have a designated room to which students with a physical disability are escorted in an emergency and then evacuated by emergency services. However, focus group discussions suggest that frequently students with a disability are not aware of these procedures and some had concerns about aspects of the procedures such as being left in a designated room.

In summary, there is considerable evidence of significant efforts having been made to improve physical access in both the FE and HE sectors. However, once more we find more consistent practice in most areas within the HE sector.

Resourcing

In light of the Disability Discrimination Act, the Tomlinson Report and the forthcoming SENDO legislation, a wide range of measures have been put in place across both the FE and HE sectors. This includes physical access improvements in 8 FE institutions, staff awareness raising in 5 institutions and staff development and targeted training in 4 institutions. Three FE institutions

have developed links with external organisations including SKillNI or LSDA, 2 have updated policies and procedures and 2 have set up equality committees. Given 12 institutions responded to the survey, the above data suggests that there is real scope for further reflection on the implications of such legislation and reports in many FE institutions.

Other improvements include improvements to marketing materials and a review of admissions and enrolment procedures, referral procedures and customer care. In 1 institution a course was set up to assist students with additional needs to access mainstream courses.

In the HE sector a range of improvements were implemented across all 4 institutions these included needs assessment of academic staff, improved IT provision and accessible independent funding for support of students not funded elsewhere. A wide ranging training programme was also put in place, including awareness training for key staff, equality impact assessment training and training of staff for recruitment and selection. Improvements also included the installation of equipment such as loop systems.

To be effective and sustainable, resourcing needs to be on-going rather than a one-off and it must be systematically organised. It must be reviewed regularly and experts in the field should be involved in the process. Suitable accommodation is a basic requirement for a quality learning/disability support service.

In relation to accommodation, 6 of the FE institutions and 1 of the 4 HE institutions did not have a designated space exclusively for use by the learning/disability support team. However 8 FE institutions and all 4 HE institutions stated that they have some access to a space suitable for confidential assessment, 6 FE institutions and all 4 HE institutions have some access to a space suitable for meetings and 3 FE institutions and all 4 HE institutions also have some access to a space suitable for staff training. Once more, there is much more consistency of provision within the HE sector than within FE.

During visits to institutions in the FE sector we observed some excellent purpose built and existing facilities which met the needs of the students and the learning/disability support team. However, in other FE institutions some staff expressed concern regarding accommodation. Their main concern was around the issue of the exclusive use of accommodation. Some staff explained that appointments and initial needs assessment of students sometimes had to be delayed because they had to book a room. This delay in assessment was often substantial and also delayed the process of organising the necessary support mechanisms and equipment and claiming funding; all of which affect the quality of the service to students. There were also concerns about confidentiality and the appropriateness of rooms.

The process of identifying resource requirements is important and needs to be clear, structured and effective, it must also be adequately resourced. Eight FE institutions stated that identifying resource requirements was done as part of the on-going student needs assessment process usually carried out by the Learning Support Co-ordinator. Two institutions identify these requirements in relation to individual need and make requisition requests annually. In another FE institution this process is viewed to be ad hoc and without a budget. Once again, there is widely varying practice within the FE sector.

In the HE sector 2 institutions identify resourcing requirements at regular meetings which involve a variety of staff including senior managers. The other 2 HE institutions carry out this function at annual reviews where there is an opportunity to make recommendations about expenditure.

While there is an important place in this process for annual review, where the growth and development of the service can be considered in depth as part of the annual requisition and budget allocation processes, it would seem that this alone would limit the effectiveness of the service.

This system must also be flexible enough to respond to urgent need as it is identified, whatever the time of the year. This flexibility and support is evident in some institutions, but not in others and particularly within the FE sector.

In examining the issue of resourcing, all FE and HE institutions identified their most urgent resourcing requirement. Five FE institutions stated that the need for the support of more specialist staff was their most urgent resourcing requirement. Two FE institutions identified the need to address their inadequate room allocation as their most urgent requirement. Although assistive technology is available in all FE and HE institutions some (2 FE and 1 HE) institutions identified the need for more enabling technology as their most urgent resourcing requirement. More technical support and training for their learning/disability support staff, the availability of funding for assessment of all students requesting it or resourcing and facilities available at out-centres were also mentioned. Another issue raised again was the time allocated to Learning Support Co-ordinators within the FE sector.

In the HE sector staff development of academic staff was an urgent issue as was the need for more physical resources and the need for financial support to allow institutions to meet the needs of part-time and international students who are not entitled to DSA.

It is appropriate to draw attention here to the fact that in the FE sector, very basic needs, such as having designated staff or access to appropriate rooms, were identified as urgent requirements. HE sector needs were more likely to focus on qualitative improvements to existing resources or procedures.

Although all institutions recognised the need for the provision of multi-format materials, 2 stated that these had never been requested and 2 others felt that there were more pressing requirements on a limited budget which would help a greater number of students. Five FE institutions and 2 HE institutions have multi-format versions of all institution publications, events and courses available.

Six FE institutions stated that multi-format materials are available on request and 2 others stated that they had plans to make this provision. In the HE sector 3 institutions stated that these adjustments were available on request. In terms of barriers to the provision of multi-format materials 5 FE and 2 HE institutions indicated that cost was the main barrier to providing this service, lack of expertise was cited by 3 FE and 1 HE institution and lack of priority by 3 FE institutions. Other barriers to providing this service include the small number of requests for the service and the lack of systematic planning. Another institution stated that they prefer to provide answers to questions in person.

Access to the institution website and intranet is important to students throughout the student pathway in terms of accessing general information and the institution Virtual Learning Environment for materials to support the curriculum as well as information. Seven FE and 3 HE institutions indicated that their web site conformed to standards which measure accessibility. These standards include BOBBY, WC3, BETSIE and conformance level A, AA and AAA.

These figures indicate that 5 FE and 1 HE institutions do not conform to any standard for accessibility, it also indicates that there is no common standard to which each sector is working towards.

In summary, there is a varying picture regarding resourcing across the sectors. The greatest variation in standards of resources is within the FE sector.

Staff Development

If a learning/disability support service is to be up-to-date the manager of the centre and the support team need to be aware of current legislation and its implications, the results of reviews, and internal procedures. The availability of on-going training in specialised equipment, software and enabling technology would further assist these practitioners in making effective use of modern technology as it expands and develops. If learning/disability support is to be integral in the day-to-day life of the institution, all staff need to be aware of current legislation and the requirements and responsibilities accompanying this. They might also benefit from the sharing of best practice, the sharing of the results of research in the area and focussed training in supporting students in their classes with particular disabilities.

The 2 most common means of keeping learning/disability support staff across both sectors up to date is through staff development, personal e-mails or memos from managers and team meetings with managers. Other ways of communicating information include the Learning Support Co-ordinators forum, SkillNI, via the Internet and by networking with staff in other institutions.

Nine FE institutions stated that 70% or more of their staff had received training on relevant legislation such as section 75 training with 3 of these institutions stated that all of their staff had received this training. In the 3 HE institutions the rate of this staff training ranged from 10% to 100%.

In terms of training available on an on-going basis, 8 FE institutions offer training in the use of specialised equipment, specialised computer software and enabling technology. Two other institutions offer training in 1 or 2 of these areas and 2 institutions don't offer any of this training. In the HE sector 1 institution offered training in the use of specialised equipment, 2 offered training in the use of specialised computer software and 2 offered training in the use of other enabling technology.

In terms of ensuring that staff throughout the organisation are kept informed of current legislation and report outcomes in relation to learning/disability support, 11 FE institutions and 3 HE institutions have meetings with individual tutors, 8 FE and all 4 HE institutions do this through staff development and training, 7 FE and 3 HE institutions use course team meetings and 5 FE and 3 HE use staff briefings. 1 FE and 1 HE institution do not keep staff informed about such issues.

There is evidence across both sectors that there is a co-ordinated and on-going attempt to keep all staff informed of developments and responsibilities in this area in most, but not all, cases.

In the FE sector 2/3 of the institutions involved in this aspect of the research offer their specialised staff on-going training in the use of specialised equipment, specialised computer software and enabling technology. However 2 institutions do not offer any such training and none of the HE institutions offer training in all 3 areas, although in the HE sector all institutions did offer training in at least 1 of the identified areas.

According to our staff survey, 37% of FE support staff and 55% of HE support staff are in regular contact with students with a disability. The training of ancillary staff is strategically so important that it merits separate mention. Support staff including receptionists, porters, care takers, canteen staff and secretaries are vital to the smooth running of any organisation. This is even more significant in the area of learning/disability support. Starting a course in a "new" building, with peers you don't know and staff you have never met is a daunting task for most students. The manner in which they are greeted (or not) on arrival, directed to rooms, and made to feel comfortable in the canteen makes a lasting impression and can impact on whether or not a prospective student actually becomes a student. These crucial contact points - meeting the gatekeepers - are often even more significant to prospective students with a disability especially if they require additional assistance.

All of this initial contact, being made to feel welcome, growing in confidence, becoming familiar with new surroundings with different systems and structures usually happens before a lesson is even delivered. This is recognised in those institutions which offer training to support staff.

In our staff survey, 71% of support staff in FE and 55% in HE stated that they have had no training in this area in the last 2 years. Seven FE institutions and 2 HE institutions claimed as part of our institutional survey that training was provided for support staff. Two FE institutions detailed training specifically for ancillary staff in their specific work role including deaf awareness, basic sign language and awareness raising for SENDO. However, the remaining FE institutions stated merely that staff development and training was open to all staff in all operational roles including support staff. Being open to staff is not necessarily the same thing as being delivered to staff.

During our discussions within institutions, some support staff discussed with us their views on learning/disability support. A number stated that they were aware that staff training in this area was open to them but they were not comfortable having to join academic staff in training sessions as they felt intimidated. They stated that they would prefer the training to be designed specifically to address issues significant to their operational role and to be delivered to staff in this operational role.

One HE institution outlined their programme of tailored training for front of house staff which takes place 3 times a year. While this training is not compulsory, it is well attended and feedback is always extremely positive.

Nine FE institutions and 3 HE institutions also claim to offer academic staff appropriate staff development. Some 60% of academic staff in the FE sector and 52% of academic staff in the HE sector claim to be in regular contact with students with a disability, according to our staff survey. However, 55% of academic staff in the FE sector and 64% of academic staff in the HE sector also claim to have had no training in this area in the past 2 years.

Furthermore, some 43% of staff across the FE sector and 29% of staff across the HE sector were either not aware of any staff development programmes relating to supporting students with a disability or they acknowledged that some training is available but stated that it is not a high priority. Therefore evidence from both our institutional survey and our staff survey, suggests that there is considerable scope for strengthening staff development. This was further supported by the representatives of external organisations that took part in the research. They feel that there is a serious lack of staff development across the FE sector particularly in relation to students with specific disabilities such as visual impairment, hearing impairment and mental health issues. There is also concern about the lack of support in the classroom and a classroom environment in which students find it difficult to declare their disability, all of which should be addressed by staff development. The issue of staff development is further explored in the chapter reporting on staff perceptions.

Referral

The manner by which students are referred to an institution and the timing of this has implications for staffing, accommodation and initial needs assessment procedures. In the HE sector students declare their disability on their UCAS form, thus enabling institutions to put support systems in place prior to the start of a course. In this way initial assessments can be spread out over a lengthy period, and applications for funding can be made early, as can applications for assistive technology and enabling software. Two HE institutions indicated that a small number of students also declare their disability to staff after starting the programme.

In the FE sector there is a wider range of referral systems and the time span in which initial needs assessment takes place is much shorter, usually beginning in late August. There is also a significant number of students who declare their disability while on the course.

In all FE institutions self-referral is significant. It is the most popular system of referral in 6 of the 8 institutions who responded to our survey. Referral from staff after starting a programme was also a feature in all but 1 FE institution.

Ten FE institutions have a small number of students referred from previous institutions and 11 FE institutions have a small number of students referred from external support agencies.

Referral from external organisations is normally done via the Learning Support Co-ordinator, and it is less frequently done through a course tutor or following case meetings with social services. The processes used include meetings, telephone contact, sampling days, and regular reviews. Referral from external agencies rarely happens in HE although 1 institution outlined the considerable work done to inform such agencies of disability provision and support available within their institution.

Nine FE institutions and all 4 HE institutions felt that it is likely that some students are not identified by the current referral systems.

One of the problems identified in relation to this includes the need for a support system within the FE institutions to help students if they are unwilling to acknowledge their learning difficulty and need advice about alternative courses of study. This seems to be done more effectively in the HE sector. The restricted office hours during which learning/disability support staff are available in the FE sector for information, support and assessment may be particularly disadvantageous for part-time and evening students.

A further problem is the likelihood that there will be students within both FE and HE with some form of learning disability (such as dyslexia), but will be unaware of it due to having developed coping mechanisms. In such circumstances, it is quite possible that no referral system will pick up such students.

The nature of the referral process and particularly the time limitations in the FE sector, obviously place learning/disability support teams under pressure as they attempt to provide a quality service to all students particularly in the early part of the academic year. This is supported by comments from students some of whom were dissatisfied because they had not had an initial needs assessment until they were months into their course. Others had been assessed relatively close to the beginning of the academic year but their funding was not available until much later, and some had not received laptops or software which they had been promised months previously.

In its attempt to provide a fully inclusive environment each institution must consider the issue of disclosure. The SENDO draft Code of Practice¹² states that institutions should be proactive in encouraging people to disclose a disability. This should include a series of opportunities along the student pathway where the benefits of disclosure are explained and confidentiality ensured. The Draft Code of Practice suggests that this might best be done in an atmosphere and culture which is open and welcoming for safe disclosure.

Thus, once more we find an area of operations where some systems and procedures are in place, but where there is clear scope for further development.

Initial Needs Assessment

Across both sectors 99% of staff were aware that there were initial needs assessment services available in their institution to identify or support students with a disability. Nine FE institutions have initial needs assessment procedures in place which begin with a one to one interview with the Learning Support Coordinator who requests supporting documentation, carries out initial assessment, requests other specialist assessment if required and agrees an action plan of support with the student. They also organise examination requirements and requests for

12 Equality Commission Northern Ireland Draft Code of Practice Further and Higher Education The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005

equipment and one to one support. Three institutions itemised their review process and have well defined, clear steps with staff that are aware of their responsibilities and are known to students. Other institutions struggle to offer this service mainly due to the time allocation of the Learning Support Co-ordinator.

As discussed earlier, in the HE sector students declare their disability (if known) on their UCAS form or register with disability services on arrival. This process includes the following or similar steps:

- Assessment is organised by the disability support team at the earliest possible date (as early as February for those who disclose on their UCAS form). This assessment will include an informal interview to establish the nature of the condition, treatment, medication, previous support, access to equipment and enabling technology and appropriate support needs.
- Course directors are involved in the assessment process where academic and professional requirements raise concerns.
- Recommendations are made by the disability officer in relation to support in class, libraries, exam arrangements, referral to career's service, application for equipment, personal support, transport and the application for funding.
- The student is informed of these recommendations.
- Recommendations are communicated across the institution by memo to key staff in faculties and departments.
- Contact is then made with support providers.
- Support arrangements are then monitored throughout the academic year and reviewed formally at the end of the year.

The initial needs assessment procedures across the HE sector seem to be clear and well managed by qualified staff with other staff supporting as necessary.

An important element of initial needs assessment is who carries out the assessment. Options were given with regard to the requirements which permitted staff to carry out initial assessment of students with a disability. In 1 FE institution and 1 HE institution a member of staff can carry out initial needs assessment without having had experience or qualifications. Five FE institutions require a combination of experience and attendance on staff development programmes, 2 other FE institutions require initial needs assessors to have specific qualifications while 4 FE institutions require initial needs assessors to have experience and specific qualifications.

Two HE institutions require 2 or more years experience working with students with a disability before a member of staff can initially assess a student. One HE institution requires initial needs assessors to have experience and specific qualifications.

Thus, there do not appear to be common accepted standards required of staff in relation to initial needs assessment, a consequence of which is a wide variety of practices.

Another important element of the initial needs assessment process is referral to external organisations for specific disabilities which require specialised knowledge. In the HE sector 1 institution explained that they required external referral where there were unusual circumstances and a second opinion is required. In another HE institution external referral is required for students with dyslexia.

The FE sector, however, appears to work more regularly with external organisations across a wider range of disabilities. In terms of whether the learning/disability support staff could carry out initial needs assessment or whether external referral would be required 10 FE institutions require external referral for students with dyslexia, 5 FE institutions require external referral for students with mental health issues, 4 for students with ADHD, 4 for students with sensory impairment and 3 for dyspraxia. External referral was also required by 2 institutions for other

disabilities including autistic spectrum, physical disability and speech and language difficulties. Two FE institutions did not list any disability that they could not facilitate and 1 FE institution indicated that the only barrier to them facilitating students with any disability was cost of support.

All institutions across both sectors stated that following initial assessment they create an individual support plan for each student and academic staff are briefed on support requirements for individual students. In response to our staff survey, only 35% of FE staff and 40% of HE staff stated that there is a purposeful and systematic use of initial assessment results across their organisations or that specialist support is available to enable the effective use of initial assessment results across the curriculum. A number of students during focus groups stated that they are sometimes responsible for informing academic staff of their needs - a responsibility with which some students are not comfortable. In other FE institutions the list of student needs which could not be met was short and each occurred in only 1 of the 12 institutions, these included - visual impairment, profound multiple disability, students prone to violence, profound learning difficulties, dyslexia, ADHD, mental health issues and speech & language difficulties.

The HE sector is very clear that they will facilitate any student who meets the course requirements and given that support needs are practicable. Requirements often include matters such as good communication skills and the ability to hold down a placement. When a student is prevented from meeting these requirements because of their disability they are provided with the necessary information and advice to allow them to consider alternatives and to make an informed decision in light of their interests, abilities and support requirements.

The ability of an institution to facilitate all students no matter what their learning difficulty or disability is an indicator of an inclusive learning environment. This is likely to require a team of specialised staff assessing students and feeding into the staff development needs of support staff and academic staff. It also requires effective referral and identification systems. Our survey suggests that while all institutions are currently making serious efforts to create a more inclusive environment, practice can vary considerably amongst institutions.

Assessment

One aspect of the support available to students is adjustments in exam structure as outlined by the Joint Council for General Qualifications and flexibility in assessment methods as negotiated by the tutor and the learning/disability support team. Learning Support Co-ordinators are involved in identifying students with assessment or examination needs in 10 FE institutions. Also involved across a range of institutions are the students themselves, course tutors, learning support staff and examinations officers. One institution stated that all staff had a role to play in this process. In the HE sector in 3 institutions the disability officer or disability services is responsible. In 1 of these institutions academic staff are also involved in this process.

In FE institutions either the LSC or the examinations officer is responsible for organising special arrangements, which include extended time, use of a laptop, rest breaks and permission to eat, and in 5 institutions they share this responsibility.

In 3 HE institutions there is a collaborative approach towards making these special arrangements - disability services, faculty staff and the examinations officer have shared responsibility. In 1 institution the responsibility lies with the student affairs officer.

All 12 FE institutions and all 4 HE institutions stated that the practice of making special arrangements for examinations and assessment is standardised across their institution.

While there is much evidence from our institutional survey of adjustments for examinations, students did not agree that this was set up in an organised manner and easily available in each institution. Furthermore, this student view is supported by some of the results from our staff

survey, and is discussed in a later chapter. In terms of assessment there would seem from the accounts of students and staff to be a wide range of practice. There is undoubtedly some good practice in many institutions, but such practice is not necessarily to a common standard across institutions.

Quality Assurance

A clear and effective quality assurance process is another important aspect of sustaining an effective service developing in line with legislative change, student demands and expanding numbers. In relation to the process for reviewing the quality of their learning/disability support service, 10 FE institutions identified the Learning Support Co-ordinator and a Deputy Director as having sole or shared responsibility for quality assurance. In terms of the process, 2 institutions review quality at annual evaluation/review meetings, 2 review quality as part of the "Improving Quality Raising Standards (IQRS)"¹³ process and 2 review quality at regular Learning Support Co-ordinator review meetings. One institution does not have a quality assurance process of any type.

In 1 HE institution the responsibility for quality lies with the Head of Student Welfare Services and their annual appraisal with staff as well as a student survey and an audit of physical access on each campus. In another 2 HE institutions, students are surveyed and recommendations presented to senior management for approval. Departmental support co-ordinators and the Director of Student Services are involved in implementing and overseeing this process. The quality of the service is also monitored by DEL.

It would seem reasonable that institutions should identify the quality standards against which they benchmark. Five FE institutions referred to the IQRS process, another to the institution quality standards and another to the inspectorate. One institute does not currently measure their service although the process is included in the IDP targets. The 2 HE institutions that responded to this question cited the QAA code of practice for students with a disability and the HE FCE guidelines. Thus, there are a variety of standards in use for quality assurance both between HE and FE and across the FE institutions.

An important element of measuring quality of service is the collection and use of feedback. Nine FE institutions made use of questionnaires, 8 made use of staff meetings and 3 used telephone surveys to collect feedback. Other methods included course reviews, the analysis of letters of complaint, team meetings and direct feedback from students. Although 10 FE institutions had some method for collecting feedback, 1 institution stated that quality assurance measures were not in place and another stated that they had reservations about the process of collecting feedback. Three HE institutions made use of questionnaires and staff meetings and the other uses individual review meetings at the end of the year to collect such feedback.

In terms of use of feedback in the FE sector, 10 institutions use feedback for the development of referral and initial assessment procedures, 9 institutions use feedback for the development of strategic planning, 8 use it for the planning and development of courses 7 institutions stated that feedback affected teaching resource allocation and in 2 FE institutions staff training and development and the purchase of assistive technology are also affected by feedback.

In the HE sector, 3 institutions use feedback for the development of referral and initial assessment procedures, 3 institutions use feedback for the development of strategic planning, 2 use it for the planning and development of courses and in 2 institutions feedback affects teaching resource allocation. Nine FE institutions and 2 HE institutions have a formalised complaints procedure specifically designed for use by students with a disability.

Thus although feedback is conscientiously gathered in the great majority of institutions, it is put to a variety of uses. There may therefore be scope for reviewing purposes of seeking feedback as part of the intervention phase of this project.

Communication and Networking

It is important to note the part played in disability support and access to education by voluntary and statutory organisations. Within these organisations there are professional staff trained in supporting specific disabilities. This is reflected in the fact that all FE and HE institutions indicated that they had regular contact with a range of external organisations. The RNIB however gave examples of FE institutions which did not make use of the expertise available in relevant external organisations. For example, some FE institutions purchased ineffective software based on the results of initial assessment which could have been avoided if the relevant external organisation had been consulted. The RNIB also stated that FE institutions were not making use of their expertise by building partnerships and getting external organisations involved in the training of tutors.

MENCAP explained that most young people leaving special schools go directly to day care and the opportunity to move into FE is missed because the communication between the FE sector and special schools is not strong enough. There are examples, however, in some FE institutions where effective programmes of learning have been developed between staff in the institution and staff in the local special school.

Networking with other organisations and attending conferences and other events are an important means of keeping up to date and sharing good practice. In the FE sector 5 institutions have been represented at 5 or more multi-agency or national events relating to learning/disability support in the previous academic year. Four FE institutions had representatives at 2 or 3 such events. In the HE sector 2 institutions had representatives at 7 or more events, and 2 HE institutions did not have representatives at any such events.

Practice in terms of networking varies considerably. Part of the follow up to this study may include a review of whether specific advice, or even guidelines, should be developed and made available to the institutions in terms of good practice in sharing expertise and networking.

INCLUSIVE LEARNING ISSUES: STAFF VIEWS

Staff within educational establishments are the most important resource in the provision of support to individual students. Furthermore, staff are of fundamental importance in establishing the culture and climate of educational establishments. From the outset therefore, it was agreed that any review of existing practice should capture staff perceptions.

Furthermore, it was recognised that in FE and HE institutions both academic and support staff have an important role to play in establishing a supportive culture for students. Therefore, the survey of staff perceptions has sought to include a wide range of both academic and support staff.

Staff were selected to participate on the following basis:

- The most senior manager with institution-wide responsibility for learning/disability support
- All learning/disability support staff
- All heads of academic departments
- A sample of senior administrative staff
- A sample of support staff
- A sample of teaching staff

Approximately 50% of all staff selected to receive a survey document on the basis of the above, fully completed and returned survey forms. In total, some 490 staff fully responded - 91 from the Higher Education sector and 399 from the Further Education sector.

One institution within the Higher Education sector declined to take part in the staff survey.

Preliminary Observation

Comments from staff during briefings prior to the completion of survey forms revealed that some teachers in both sectors do not see learning/disability support as their responsibility. Some see it as the responsibility of the learning/disability support staff. Even reasonable adjustments such as the distribution of class notes in advance or in a variety of formats is not accepted by all staff as part of their responsibility. There is evidence that some staff are particularly unclear and lacking in confidence about working with students with a mental health issue.

Higher Education and Further Education sectors

It was expected at the inception of the study that there might be a considerable difference between those operating within the Higher Education sector, and the Further Education sector. As will be noted, this expectation has been met. This chapter therefore has disaggregated findings on a sector basis to allow for analysis and comparison of sector responses.

Profile of respondents

The following table presents a breakdown of all respondents to the staff survey.

Table 2: Respondents by sector and job category

Sector Job Category	Further Education		Higher Education	
	No.	%	No.	%
Academic	293	73.4	67	73.6
Support/Admin	98	24.6	22	24.2
Not known	8	2.0	2	2.2
Totals	399	100	91	100

The above table demonstrates that the survey resulted in remarkably similar response levels by broad category of staff. For each sector approximately three quarters of respondents were in academic posts, and one quarter in support/administrative roles. These broad categorisations are of sufficient scale to make disaggregation meaningful, although it must be emphasised they include staff at different levels of seniority and with a wide variety of roles.

However, while there is considerable similarity of response across sector in terms of broad job category, there is little similarity in terms of gender of respondents as the following table reveals.

Table 3: Respondents by sector and gender

Sector Job Category	Further Education		Higher Education	
	No.	%	No.	%
Male	141	35.3	56	61.5
Female	258	64.7	35	38.5
Totals	399	100	91	100

Thus our samples are very similar in terms of job category, but significantly different in terms of the gender of respondents. In the following sections we have presented overall data disaggregated by sector and job category in the main, as this is particularly relevant to the course of our analysis. However, the interested reader can find data disaggregated by sector and gender in the appendix.

Contact with students with a disability

We were interested in the extent to which respondents were aware of being in contact with students with a disability or learning difficulty. The following tables present the relevant data.

Table 4: FE staff contact with students with disabilities, by job category

Contact	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	176	60.1	36	36.7	5	62.5	217	54.4
No	110	37.5	55	56.1	3	37.5	168	42.1
No response	7	2.4	7	7.1			14	3.5
Totals	293	100	98	100	8	100	399	100

Table 5: HE staff contact with students with disabilities, by job category

Contact	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	35	52.2	12	54.6	1	50.0	48	52.8
No	29	43.3	8	36.4	1	50.0	38	41.8
No response	3	4.5	2	9.1			5	5.5
Totals	67	100	22	100	2	100	91	100

In both sectors, the majority of respondents claim to come into contact with students with a disability. More academic staff in the FE sector than in the HE sector claim such contact, but the situation is reversed for support staff, where more respondents from the HE sector claim to be in contact with such students than is the case in the FE sector. Overall however, our survey results reflect the views of staff, more than half of whom claim to be in contact with students with a disability.

Staff training

Staff were asked if they had received any staff training during the last two years in relation to supporting students with a disability. Responses from the FE and HE sectors were as follows.

Table 6: FE staff training in relation to students with disabilities, by job category

Contact	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	127	43.3	25	25.5	2	25.0	154	38.6
No	161	55.0	70	71.4	6	75.0	237	59.4
No response	5	1.7	3	3.1			8	2.0
Totals	293	100	98	100	8	100	399	100

Table 7: HE staff training in relation to students with disabilities, by job category

Contact	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	23	34.3	9	40.9	1	50.0	33	36.3
No	43	64.2	12	54.6	1	50.0	56	61.5
No response	1	1.5	1	4.6			2	2.2
Totals	67	100	22	100	2	100	91	100

Although a majority of staff in all categories claim not to have received any staff training in relation to disabilities in the course of the last two years, a significant minority have. However, since a majority of respondents have already indicated they are in contact with students with a disability this might suggest there is scope for extending the reach of staff training.

Staff opinions

We presented each respondent with a set of statements, and asked them to rate them for agreement using a 0-10 scale, where 10 indicates complete agreement, 0 complete disagreement and therefore where 5 represents the neutral (or completely uncertain) pivot score.

In the following table we reveal the count (the number of respondents addressing the particular statement), the mean score, and the standard deviation. The standard deviation is a measure of dispersal around the mean. The larger the standard deviation, the greater has been the spread of scores.

For the sake of space we have précised the statements presented to respondents in the following tables.

Table 8: FE responses to statements by job category

Statement	Academic			Support/Admin			Not known		
	Count	Mean	Std Dev	Count	Mean	Std Dev	Count	Mean	Std Dev
1. Fully aware of policies and procedures.	289	7.18	2.27	87	5.68	2.96	8	5.13	3.27
2. Always briefed in advance of work with a student.	275	5.98	3.28	68	3.43	3.37	7	5.43	3.82
3. Fully aware of initial assessment procedures.	289	5.91	3.13	75	3.72	3.13	8	5.00	3.55
4. Appropriate facilities and equipment.	279	6.27	2.86	67	4.70	2.98	8	5.00	2.14
5. Appropriate professional support from experts.	279	5.90	3.07	69	4.91	3.22	8	4.75	2.60
6. Left to me to decide how best to work with student.	278	4.58	3.45	63	4.57	3.52	8	5.25	4.13
7. Not appropriate to change our way of working.	277	1.87	2.53	69	2.80	3.13	8	3.63	3.34
8. More should be done to support students.	286	7.24	2.85	77	7.16	2.72	8	8.50	2.00
9. I've been involved in a particularly successful support approach.	272	5.43	3.73	66	3.85	3.68	8	4.00	3.02

Table 9: HE responses to statements by job category

Statement	Academic			Support/Admin			Not known		
	Count	Mean	Std Dev	Count	Mean	Std Dev	Count	Mean	Std Dev
1. Fully aware of policies and procedures.	67	7.25	2.22	22	8.09	2.49	2	8.50	2.12
2. Always briefed in advance of work with a student.	67	8.00	2.74	20	7.55	2.44	2	8.00	2.83
3. Fully aware of initial assessment procedures.	67	5.40	3.27	22	7.82	2.82	2	7.00	4.24
4. Appropriate facilities and equipment.	67	7.24	2.17	21	7.19	2.82	2	8.50	2.12
5. Appropriate professional support from experts.	67	6.46	3.13	22	7.41	2.52	2	6.50	2.12
6. Left to me to decide how best to work with student.	67	2.79	2.89	21	4.38	3.73	2	1.50	2.12
7. Not appropriate to change our way of working.	67	1.51	2.69	22	1.91	2.99	2	1.50	2.12
8. More should be done to support students.	67	5.27	2.83	22	6.27	3.33	2	5.00	0.00
9. I've been involved in a particularly successful support approach.	65	3.74	3.73	19	6.68	3.79	2	5.00	7.07

Comparing the two tables above presents some very informative contrasts. The first five statements are features of good practice in terms of being aware of policies, being briefed in advance of working with a student with a disability, being aware of initial assessment procedures, having appropriate facilities and having the support of experts.

We note that support staff in HE in each and every one of these five areas are significantly more positive than their FE counterparts. Indeed the contrast is remarkable. Whereas in all areas support staff in HE are very positive, giving mean scores of over 7.00 indicating strong agreement with the statements, in the case of FE support staff, they give mean scores of below 5 in four of the five areas, indicating disagreement with the statement.

Although there is greater similarity in scores when comparing academic staff, we note nonetheless that in four of the five areas academic staff from the HE sector are more positive than their FE counterparts. Furthermore, we draw attention in particular to responses to statement 2. HE academic staff give a mean rating of 8.00, indicating very strong agreement with the statement “I am always briefed in advance if I am expected to work with a student with a disability”, compared to a modestly positive mean rating of only 5.98 from FE academic staff.

Statement 6 responses indicate disagreement with statement “If I identify a student with a disability, it is largely left to myself to decide how best to work with the student.” However, the disagreement is significantly stronger in both categories of HE staff than FE staff.

Statement 7 responses indicate very strong disagreement from all quarters to the statement “In my area of work, it is not appropriate to change our way of working to accommodate students with disabilities”. Put more positively, respondents recognise it is appropriate to change practices to enable students with disabilities to effectively engage. There is therefore no evidence that staff are resistant to working effectively with students with disabilities.

There is agreement with the statement “I believe more should be done to support students with disabilities.” However we note that in this case agreement levels are highest amongst FE sector respondents. This is perhaps understandable considering that the FE sector respondents were more critical in their earlier responses.

Overall, perceptions as captured by the above statements suggest staff views are more positive within the HE than within the FE sector. This is entirely in tune with the chapter discussing responses to the institutional survey, where it was argued that the HE sector appears to have more systematic procedures in place than the FE sector.

The final statement was aimed at identifying individuals who may be able to assist during the next phase of the project in describing particularly purposeful interventions that may be useful as case study material for dissemination purposes. Although mean scores are modest, it has been possible to identify a number of individuals in each sector and each job category who believe they have been involved in particularly successful approaches to supporting students with disabilities. However, it is not appropriate to identify such individuals within a report of this nature.

Organisational and cultural analysis

Respondents were invited to consider a series of descriptions covering 10 aspects of their organisation. In all cases we provided 6 descriptions. Respondents were asked to identify the description, or descriptions, that in their view best approximated their view of their institution. In the appendix we provide detailed and extensive tables of data. In the following we present a series of bar charts describing overall perceptions. These are presented by sector, but are not disaggregated by category or gender. In a few cases, we refer to the disaggregated data that can be found within the appendix.

Organisational support

We began by seeking to capture staff views on their experience of how students with a disability are supported within their institution. The following key explains the categories for charts 1 and 2

Key 1: For charts 1 and 2

Key

- | | |
|----|--|
| a. | Nothing seems planned or coordinated when dealing with students with disabilities. |
| b. | Responsibility for students with disabilities is delegated to appropriate staff. |
| c. | There is a coordinated approach to dealing with students with disabilities. |
| d. | Management regularly review the staff needed to support students. |
| e. | Management ensure good practice is adopted throughout the organisation. |
| f. | My organisation gives a high priority in its future planning to the needs of students with disabilities. |

Chart 1: FE respondent views on how the organisation deals with students

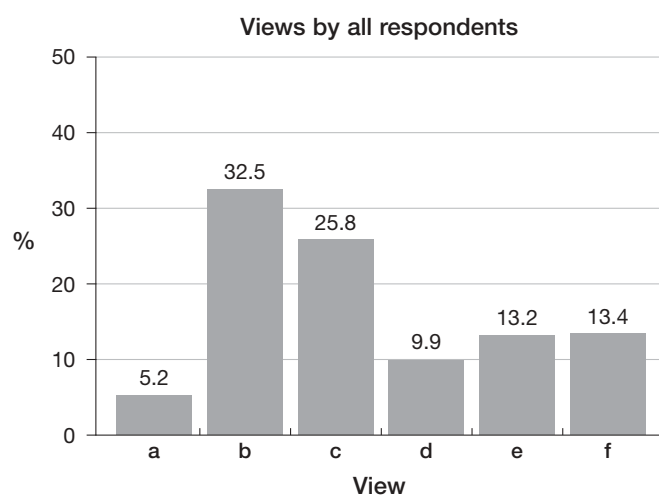
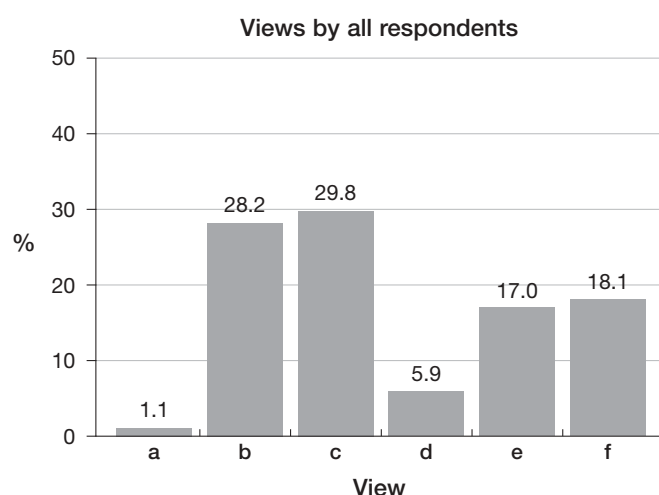


Chart 2: HE respondent views on how the organisation deals with students



As is evident from the above, for both the FE and HE respondents their organisations were predominantly viewed as having a coordinated approach, and devolving responsibility for students with a disability. Staff in the HE sector were more likely than those in the FE sector to believe their institution was good at sharing good practice and at ensuring forward planning took account of the needs of students with a disability. They were less likely to believe the approach of the organisation is uncoordinated, and that management regularly review staff needs. This seems much in tune with earlier analysis.

Management support

Respondents were next invited to reflect on their experience of the approach of management towards students with a disability. The key to categories in this area follows.

Key 2: For charts 3 and 4

Key

- | | |
|----|--|
| a. | I am not aware of my line management giving any priority to disability issues. |
| b. | Disability support is managed in isolation from everything else. |
| c. | There is a well managed central support service for students with disabilities. |
| d. | Management keep me informed of good practice in supporting students with disabilities. |
| e. | Disability support services provide good support and advice to everyone in my area of work in relation to dealing with students with disabilities. |
| f. | Staff with expertise in disability contribute to future planning in our department. |

Chart 3: FE staff views on management approach

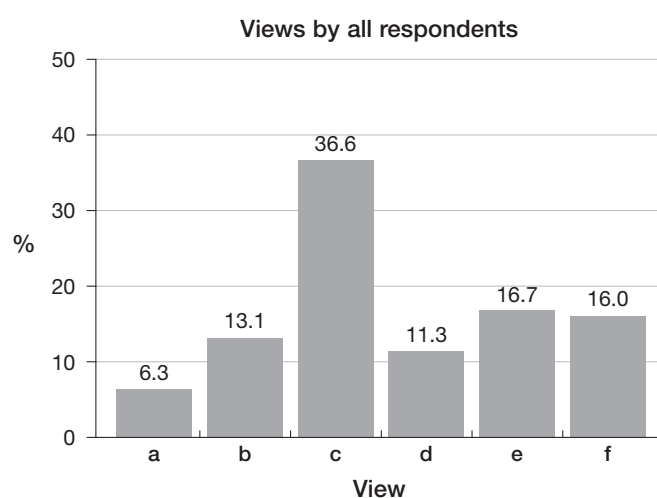
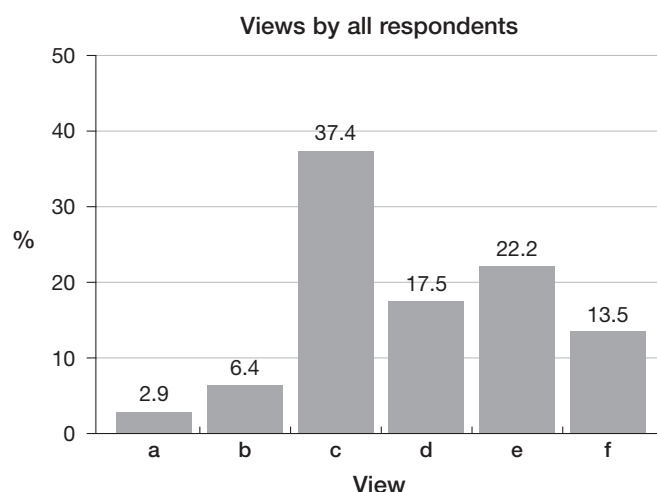


Chart 4: HE staff views on management approach



The most frequent response in both sectors has been to recognise that there is a well managed central support service. In terms of other features, FE staff were significantly more likely than HE staff to believe that line management give little priority to disability issues, and to believe that disability support is managed in isolation. HE staff were significantly more positive regarding line management keeping staff informed about good practice, and regarding disability support services providing effective support to staff in their dealings with students with a disability. FE staff were slightly more likely to believe that disability experts contributed to departmental planning.

Overall, both sectors give strong recognition to the existence of an effective central support service, but HE staff are more likely than FE staff to be positive about the role of line management. This suggests that the issue of the role of line management within FE may be worthy of attention during the next phase of the project.

Access and support

Respondents were asked to reflect on their experience of access and support for students with a disability in their institution. The following key outlines the categories that formed the basis for reflection.

Key 3: For charts 5 and 6

Key

- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | The buildings and facilities in my place of work are entirely unsuitable for students with disabilities. |
| b. | Some parts of our buildings are accessible to those with physical disabilities, and there is some specialist assistance such as signage in Braille. |
| c. | Access and related issues are well co-ordinated throughout my organisation. |
| d. | Accessibility issues are part of our planning, including for one off events. |
| e. | Multi-format material is available to support all events and courses. |
| f. | All aspects of access to education are included in forward planning. |

Chart 5: FE staff views on access and support

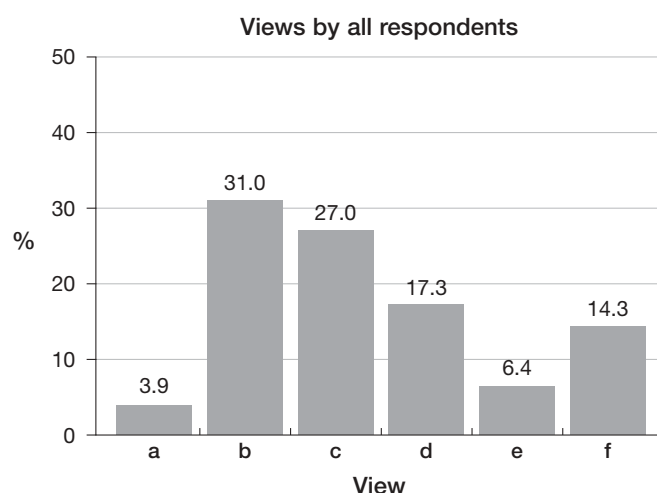
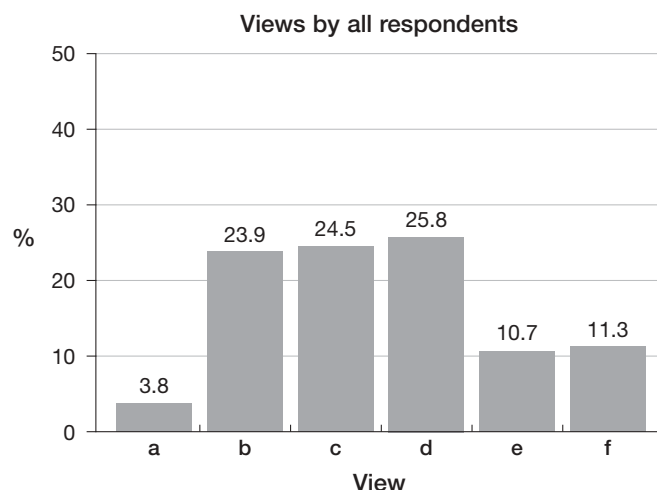


Chart 6: HE staff views on access and support



For FE staff, two aspects drive perceptions. First, that there is some access and signage support, and secondly that access issues are well coordinated. These two features are also strongly evident in HE perceptions, but in addition HE staff are more likely to believe planning for access is a feature of one off events. FE and HE staff are very unlikely to believe that in general educational buildings are unsuitable for disabled access.

In this regard the most striking aspect is the recognition of some strength regarding access issues. Less than 4% of all responses in each sector believe existing premises are unsuitable. We reflect in greater depth later in this chapter regarding issues relating to the physical environment. We now turn to consider wider support within the organisation for students with a disability.

Wider organisation support

The key which follows makes clear that the focus of this next section was on wider support, and support staff within organisations. This needs to be kept in mind. This section was not reflecting on specialist disability support staff, but on the wider support staffing of educational establishments.

Key 4: For charts 7 and 8

Key

- a. Support staff, such as canteen and janitorial staff, are not equipped to assist students with disabilities.
- b. Support staff are expected to help, but it is left to them to decide how best to provide assistance.
- c. There is a central support, including staff development, to enable support staff to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- d. Support departments plan and develop provision of students with disabilities.
- e. There is a systematic sharing of good practice amongst all support departments.
- f. The organisation includes support departments in the forward planning of disability policies.

Note from the above key, that both items a. and b. suggest organisational weakness. As can be seen from the following charts, and particularly for the FE sector, a perception of organisational weakness is stronger in this area, than has been noted in earlier sections.

Chart 7: FE views on wider organisation support

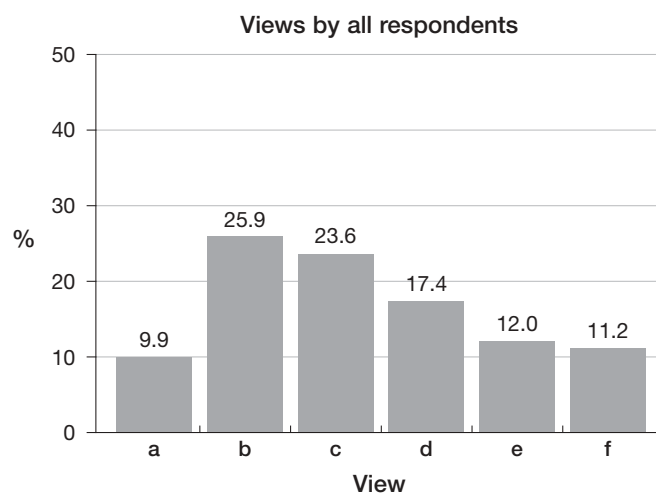
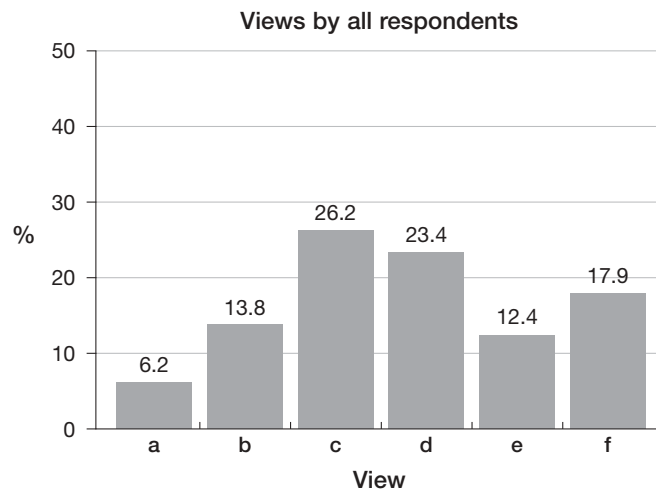


Chart 8: HE views on wider organisation support

For the FE sector, some 35.8% of all responses point to either support staff not being equipped to assist students with a disability or to being left to their own devices to decide how to assist. In the HE sector it is a significant, but also lower, 20% of all responses that fall into these categories.

We note from the tables within the appendix¹⁴ that when the data is disaggregated by job category, that 38.3% of support staff in FE, and 19.5% of support staff in HE believe they are ill-equipped and/or left to their own devices. However we also note that no less than 30.3% of responses from HE support staff identified items e and f, which infers both a sharing of good practice and an engagement in forward planning. Indeed, for HE support staff item f received more recognition than any other item. In contrast, only 11% of FE support staff responses identified with item f.

This suggests that there is a need, and in particular within the FE sector, to give further consideration to the appropriate development of wider support staff.

Examination and assessment support

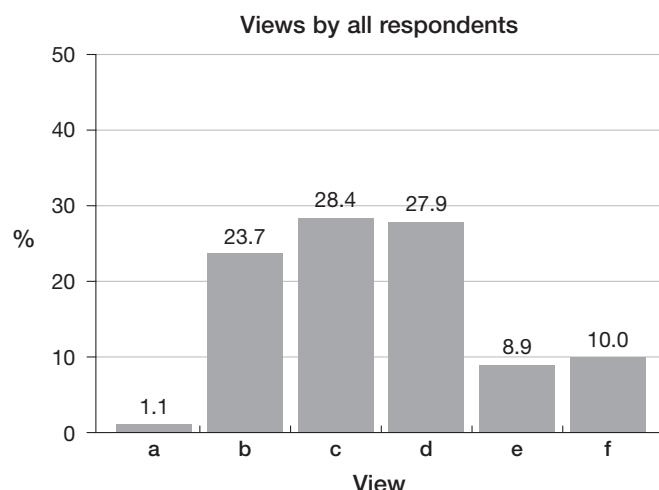
Turning to the important issue of examination and assessment support for students with a disability, key 5 displays the range of conditions respondents were invited to respond to.

Key 5: For charts 9 and 10

Key

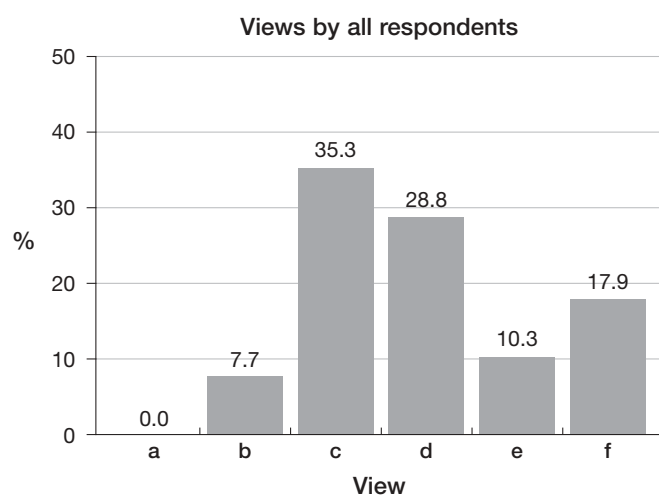
- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | There is no special examination or assessment support for students with disabilities. |
| b. | Special examination and assessment arrangements are dealt with in an ad hoc, on request basis. |
| c. | There is a centralized system for the co-ordination of special examination and assessment arrangements. |
| d. | Special examination and assessment needs are identified and communicated at the outset of the student's course. |
| e. | Course teams plan for multiple examination and assessment methods. |
| f. | Differentiation of examination and assessment arrangements has become part of standard practice. |

¹⁴ See Appendix tables 34 and 59.

Chart 9: FE views on examination and assessment support

We found the above perception of FE staff somewhat surprising (and as will be seen significantly different from HE staff) as regards the fact that some 23.7% of responses pointed to matters being dealt with in an ad hoc, on request basis. We therefore explored the data further, isolating the responses from academic staff, lest the figure was unduly inflated by support staff views. As the table in the appendix¹⁵ reveals, some 24.7% of responses from FE academic staff indicated a belief that matters were dealt with on an ad hoc basis.

Although across all respondents items c. and d. received strongest levels of recognition (together, a total of 56.3% of all responses), suggesting there is a central system and that needs are identified at the outset, it is nonetheless of some concern that a significant number of responses, particularly from academic staff in FE, believe that matters are handled in an ad hoc, request based manner.

Chart 10: HE views on examination and assessment support

As is evident from the above, HE staff have a much more positive view than FE staff in relation to examination and assessment arrangements. Not a single response claimed there were no special arrangements, and only 7.7% of responses indicated a belief that matters were dealt with on an ad hoc manner.

To an even stronger degree than FE staff, HE staff responses gave strong recognition to items c. and d. (together, a total of 64.1% of all responses), suggesting there is a central system and that needs are identified at the outset.

¹⁵ See Appendix table 36.

In the area of examinations and assessment there is a clear division between FE staff and HE staff perceptions. HE staff have a more positive view on matters than FE staff. Given that the further education sector delivers a wide variety of externally validated qualifications which require a significant element of continuous assessment, and also use a very wide range of assessment methods, it may be of particular concern that positive views regarding examination and assessment arrangements for students with a disability are not higher.

Teaching and learning practice

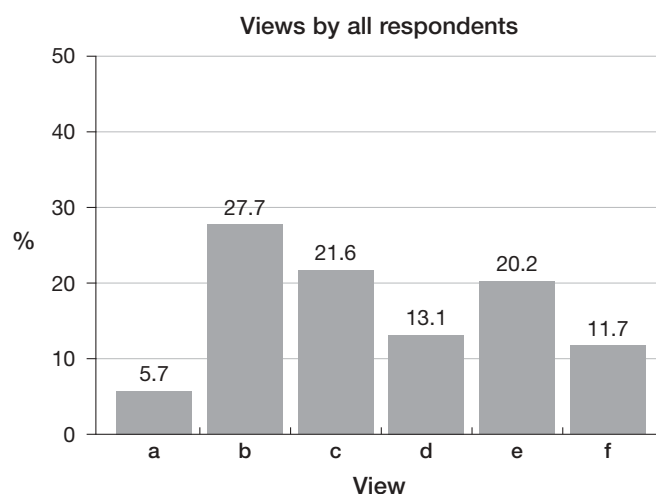
We turn now to consider perceptions of teaching and learning practice. As key 6 explains, items a. and b. suggest an uncoordinated approach to developing good practice regarding including those with a disability.

Key 6: For charts 11 and 12

Key

- a. Teaching and learning practice is not affected by the presence of students with disabilities.
- b. Changes in teaching and learning are entirely left to individual teaching staff.
- c. There is a coordinated approach in our department to supporting the teaching and learning needs of students with disabilities.
- d. The needs of students with disabilities are integrated across the entire curriculum.
- e. Learning and teaching resources are available in a variety of formats to support a range of needs and learning styles.
- f. Support tools are integrated across the curriculum, and staff are trained in the use of ILT and enabling technologies.

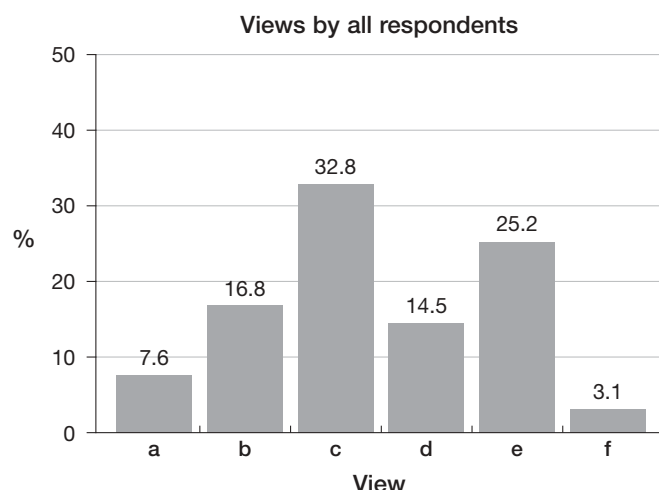
Chart 11: FE views on teaching and learning



The views of FE staff suggest, even more so than in the case of examination and assessment arrangements, that there is a real need to focus on developing appropriate teaching and learning responses. Some 33.4% of all responses (and 36.4% for academic staff¹⁶) from FE staff indicate a belief that, when students with a disability (and remember this term includes learning disability) are present, either teaching and learning practice is not affected, or it is left entirely to the response of individual members of the teaching staff. Although this means 66.8% of responses were located within the positive domains of c. to f. it does suggest there may be some distance yet to travel before effective and comprehensive responses to the learning needs of those with a disability can be claimed.

As can be seen in the following chart, although HE staff again display more positive views, it is also the case that the overall responses suggest there is scope for development here too, as chart 12 suggests.

¹⁶ See Appendix table 38.

Chart 12: HE views on teaching and learning

For HE staff, some 24.2% of all responses (and 26.4% for academic staff¹⁷) indicated a belief that when students with a disability are present, either teaching and learning practice is not affected, or it is left entirely to the response of individual members of the teaching staff. Although just over 75% of all responses present a more positive view, there still appears scope for development in this area.

Our analysis thus far suggests there is real scope for developing the contribution of support staff, developing provision in relation to examinations and assessments, and developing teaching and learning approaches, and it is now therefore appropriate to turn to consider views on staff development.

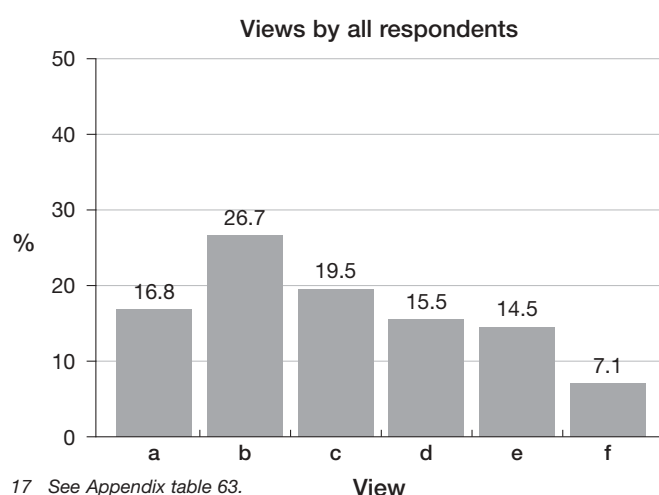
Staff development

Key 7 again presents a range of descriptors, where items a. and b. are indicative of some degree of perceived weakness.

Key 7: For charts 13 and 14

Key

- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | I am not aware of any staff development programmes relating to supporting students with disabilities. |
| b. | Some training is available, but it is not a high priority. |
| c. | There is a coordinated approach to the provision of staff training in disability issues. |
| d. | Staff training for all staff is available from expert trainers. |
| e. | There is a coordinated approach to the identification of staff training needs. |
| f. | Accredited training is available, and training plans are systematically developed for staff. |

Chart 13: FE staff views on staff development

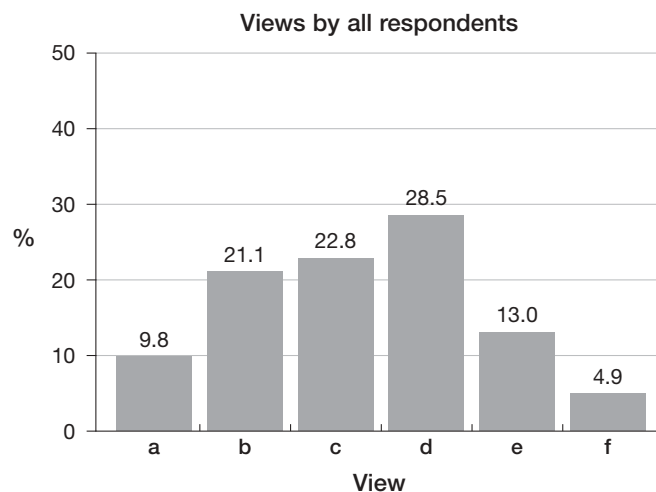
¹⁷ See Appendix table 63.

Some 43.5% of all responses (and 43.7% for academic staff¹⁸) from the FE sector suggest that staff are either completely unaware of any staff development related to supporting students with a disability, or state that such training as exists is not a high priority.

Recalling that our sample selection is likely to give a bias in favour of including those with a particular responsibility for supporting students with disabilities, this finding suggests there is scope for using staff development to enhance levels of skilled support.

We also note from chart 14, that although staff perception appears more positive in the HE sector, it also suggests that there is considerable scope for utilising staff training in the pursuit of higher standards of skill and knowledge.

Chart 14: HE staff views on staff development



As can be seen, 30.9% of all responses (and 31.9% from academic staff¹⁹) from the HE sector suggest that staff are either completely unaware of any staff development related to supporting students with a disability, or that such training as exists is not a high priority.

We note a further significant difference between the FE and HE sector perceptions. Some 28.5% of all responses from the HE sector consider that in addition to effectively coordinated staff training, it is available from expert trainers, whereas only 15.5% of FE responses indicated this to be the case.

It seems appropriate to conclude that there is scope in both sectors to further strengthen the contribution of staff development. In the FE sector it is particularly evident and reflects the diversity of provision and the range of learners accessing the sector.

Initial assessment

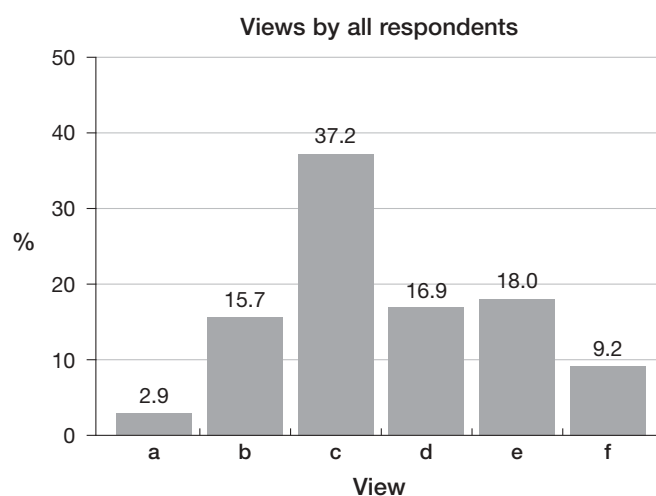
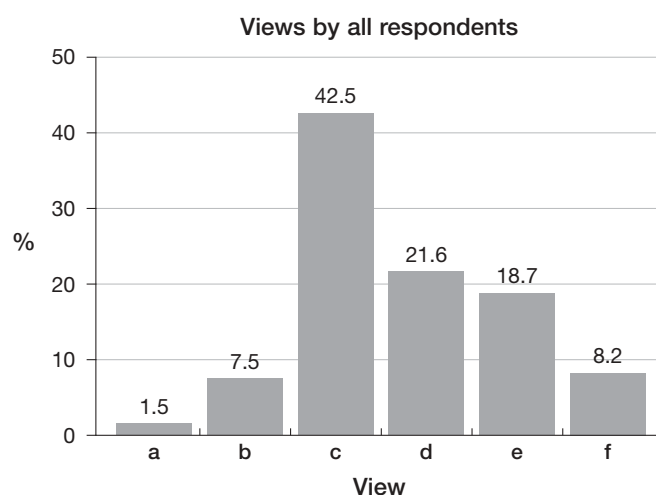
It is widely acknowledged that the quality and availability of initial assessment procedures is key to the effective provision of learning support for students with a disability. Key 8 describes the range of descriptors used for reflection. Again, note that items a. and b. predominantly describe weak processes.

¹⁸ See Appendix table 40.

¹⁹ See Appendix table 65.

Key 8: For charts 15 and 16**Key**

-
- a. There are no initial assessment services available to identify or support students with disabilities.
-
- b. Initial assessment is limited and ad hoc.
-
- c. There is a coordinated approach across the organisation to the initial assessment of students.
-
- d. There is a purposeful and systematic use of initial assessment results across the organisation.
-
- e. Specialist support is available to enable the effective use of initial assessment results across the curriculum.
-
- f. An overall evaluation of initial assessment results is used to inform future planning within the organisation.
-

Chart 15: FE staff views on initial assessment**Chart 16: HE staff views on initial assessment**

The above patterns suggest similar patterns of perceptions amongst FE and HE staff. In both charts 15 and 16 we see a strong predominance of item c., suggesting a perception of a coordinated approach to initial assessment.

However, we note that in terms of items a. and b. which describe relatively weak positions, FE staff responses identified either a. or b. in 18.6% of cases, and HE staff in only 9% of cases. These levels are not as high as in earlier factors, suggesting that in terms of perception, FE staff are more positive in relation to initial assessment, than in the situation of examination and assessment arrangements. Furthermore, both FE and HE staff are more positive about initial assessment than about either teaching and learning practice, or staff development.

While the 9% of HE responses selecting a relatively weak description is comparatively low, the 18.6% relating to FE staff may be considered more of a concern.

We turn for our final two areas, to matters of a more economic and administrative nature.

Funding

Firstly we explore perceptions relating to funding.

Key 9: For charts 17 and 18

Key

- a. Little priority is given to securing funds for the support of students with disabilities.
- b. Funding is mainly via special project funds.
- c. There is coordinated funding of support services for students with disabilities.
- d. There is a designated budget for the funding of staff development opportunities.
- e. There is a centrally funded specialist support unit, which coordinates support services across the organisation.
- f. There is a planned deployment of resources across the organisation based on needs analysis.

Chart 17: FE staff views on funding regimes

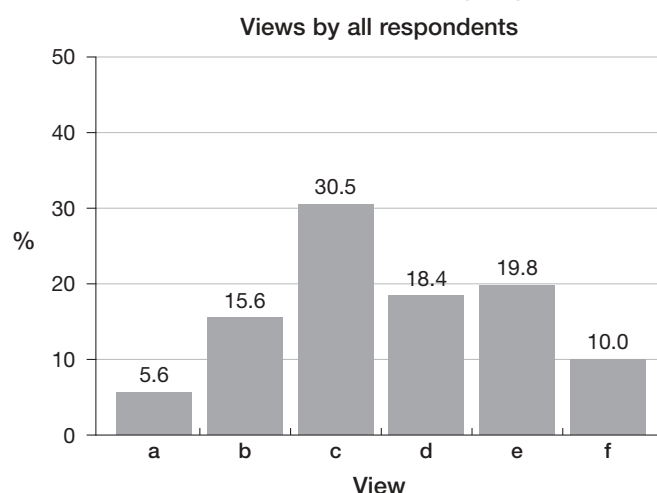
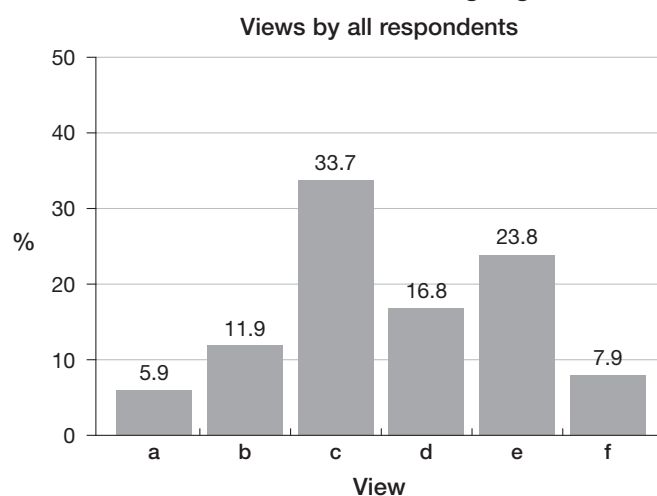


Chart 18: HE staff views on funding regimes



In the area of perceptions of funding, FE and HE staff perceptions are much closer. We note that similar low percentages are attributed to item a. which relates to the belief that little priority is given to securing additional support funds for students with disabilities. Also, in both cases the

predominant perception is that coordinated funding exists. Furthermore, across both sectors there is a relatively high recognition of funding for staff development and specialist support. This therefore is an area where staff perceptions in both sectors are more positive than the areas already discussed. This is in line with the SENDO draft Code of Practice 2005²⁰ which suggests that flexible budgeting to allow for the allocation of finances mid-year is good practice.

Finally in this section of the chapter we turn to effective record keeping, to ensure educational establishments have the types of records that can assist in the overall control and future planning of provision

Records

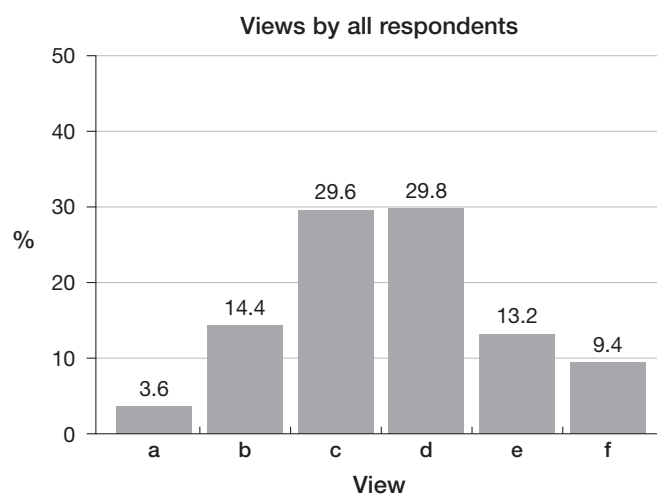
Key 10 describes the final set of descriptors used. We note once again that items a. and b. describe relatively weak positions.

Key 10: For charts 19 and 20

Key

-
- a. There is no systematic record keeping in relation to students with disabilities.
 - b. Record keeping is ad hoc, and dependent upon the interest of staff.
 - c. There is a common and coordinated approach to record keeping across the organisation.
 - d. Records are kept up to date and relevant.
 - e. Data entry and retrieval is available to all relevant staff on an appropriate basis.
 - f. Evaluation of records is part of the evidence base used in future planning across the organisation.
-

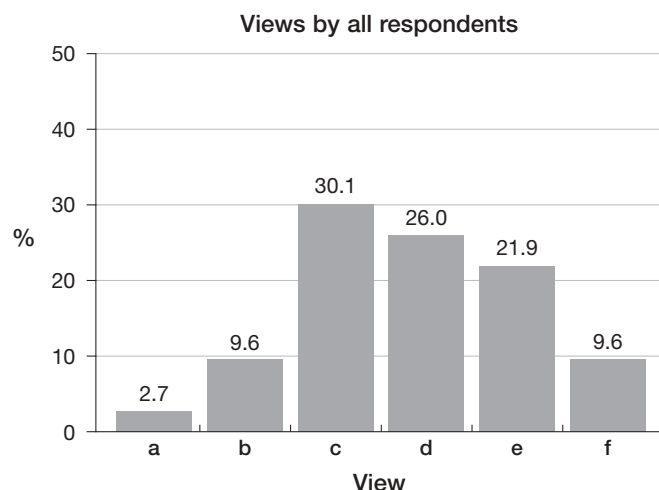
Chart 19: FE staff views on record keeping



Some 18% of responses from FE staff identify with relatively weak descriptions. However, two descriptions dominate perceptions: c. and d. This suggests that, in the main, FE institutions are viewed as having a coordinated system that is kept up to date.

The view of HE staff is even more positive as chart 20 reveals.

Chart 20: HE staff views on record keeping



Only 12.3% of responses from the HE sector suggest record keeping is weak. Indeed, descriptors c., d. and e. describe the predominant perceptions.

Thus although there is a significant minority view that record keeping is weak, suggesting that this is a further area worthy of paying some attention to at the intervention stage of the project, the perceived level of weakness is not as high as in a number of the earlier areas discussed.

Interim summary of organisational features

This section of the chapter has evidenced that staff perceptions are broadly in line with the detailed information provided by the institutional survey. There is a wide range of issues where interventions are appropriate to strengthen support for students with a disability. Furthermore, weaknesses appear more significant in the FE sector than in the HE sector, although there is clearly scope for further development in both sectors.

Perceptions of barriers

Respondents were asked to identify the three most significant barriers preventing students with a disability from choosing their institution as a place of study. Table 10 describes the pattern of responses from FE staff, and table 11 from HE staff.

Table 10: FE staff views on barriers, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Funding	56	7.5	22	8.9	1	5.9
b. Lack of confidence	143	19.2	36	14.6	3	17.6
c. Lack of qualifications	34	4.6	8	3.2	2	11.8
d. Weaknesses in the referral system	55	7.4	10	4.0	0	0.0
e. Lack of awareness of general support available	160	21.4	50	20.2	3	17.6
f. Lack of awareness of curriculum support facilities available	104	13.9	39	15.8	3	17.6
g. Absence of appropriate car parking facilities	23	3.1	16	6.5	2	11.8
h. Absence of ramps/lifts/appropriate toilet facilities	21	2.8	11	4.5	1	5.9
i. Absence of appropriate signage for students with a visual impairment	35	4.7	21	8.5	0	0.0
j. Lack of provision of documentation in a variety of formats	66	8.8	13	5.3	1	5.9
k. Other	15	2.0	4	1.6	0	0.0
l. Don't know	34	4.6	17	6.9	1	5.9
Total responses	746	100	247	100	17	100

In the above table, the three barriers gaining most recognition, relate to a lack of awareness of both general and curriculum support facilities, and to a general lack of confidence amongst prospective students with a disability. It is interesting to note too that these aspects have been highlighted by a significantly greater number of respondents, than other barriers listed.

The above suggests that the views of staff within the FE sector, point to a need for improved information and guidance for prospective disabled students. Although as we have seen, there is likely to be a need to strengthen provision in a range of areas, the predominant view that there are coordinated services available for students with a disability, appears to have shaped perceptions that the key barriers to engagement are more to do with awareness and confidence, than with specific physical or cultural weaknesses within institutions.

HE staff, as the following table reveals, agree with FE staff in relation to 2 of the 3 predominant barriers.

Table 11: HE staff views on barriers, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Funding	19	11.4	10	18.9	0	0.0
b. Lack of confidence	31	18.6	15	28.3	2	33.3
c. Lack of qualifications	13	7.8	7	13.2	2	33.3
d. Weaknesses in the referral system	5	3.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
e. Lack of awareness of general support available	38	22.8	9	17.0	0	0.0
f. Lack of awareness of curriculum support facilities available	18	10.8	8	15.1	0	0.0
g. Absence of appropriate car parking facilities	8	4.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
h. Absence of ramps/lifts/appropriate toilet facilities	7	4.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
i. Absence of appropriate signage for students with a visual impairment	10	6.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
j. Lack of provision of documentation in a variety of formats	7	4.2	1	1.9	1	16.7
k. Other	3	1.8	0	0.0	1	16.7
l. Don't know	8	4.8	3	5.7	0	0.0
Total responses	167	100	53	100	6	100

As can be seen from the above table, lack of awareness of general support, and lack of confidence are also identified by HE staff as key barriers to engagement. However, HE staff are, albeit by a small margin, more likely to see funding as the third most likely barrier, rather than lack of awareness of curriculum support facilities.

It would seem wise therefore for DEL, in partnership with both FE and HE institutions, to give further consideration to the strengthening of communication and information sharing with prospective students. This might necessitate considering how best to enable guidance agencies in Northern Ireland to be key vehicles for the transmission of comprehensive and accurate information.

Reflections on noted improvements

We also invited staff to reflect on improvements they have noticed in the last two years that have facilitated the participation of students with a disability within their institution. In this case, they were allowed to identify as many or as few as applied. Table 12 describes the pattern of responses from FE staff, and table 13 from HE staff.

Table 12: FE staff views on improvements, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Clear and comprehensive funding mechanisms	35	5.0	5	2.2	2	11.8
b. Wide ranging and seamless referral systems	28	4.0	6	2.7	0	0.0
c. Marketing activities which outline the support and facilities available to students with a disability and/or learning difficulty.	81	11.5	26	11.6	2	11.8
d. Appropriate car-parking facilities	168	23.9	51	22.8	3	17.6
e. Provision of ramps, lifts and appropriate toilet facilities	217	30.9	73	32.6	6	35.3
f. Provision of appropriate of signage to facilitate students with a visual impairment	121	17.2	41	18.3	2	11.8
g. Provision of documentation in a variety of formats	19	2.7	9	4.0	1	5.9
h. Other	16	2.3	1	0.4	1	5.9
i. None	17	2.4	12	5.4	0	0.0
Total responses	702	100	224	100	17	100

In table 12 we have highlighted the three most recognised improvements: d., e and f. As can be seen, these relate to physical improvements in the environment, which helps explain why in earlier tables, such physical features were not identified as key barriers.

We also note that marketing activities and referral systems which relate to the main barriers identified earlier, have also been noted as recent improvements by a much smaller number of respondents. This reflects the dynamics of the sector where areas can be perceived as improving while also being perceived as requiring further development.

Again, we note from table 13 that HE staff have also identified 2 areas of improvement that FE staff also identified.

Table 13: HE staff views on improvements, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Clear and comprehensive funding mechanisms	12	8.8	2	4.3	0	0.0
b. Wide ranging and seamless referral systems	12	8.8	3	6.5	1	25.0
c. Marketing activities which outline the support and facilities available to students with a disability and/or learning difficulty.	11	8.0	6	13.0	0	0.0
d. Appropriate car-parking facilities	22	16.1	7	15.2	1	25.0
e. Provision of ramps, lifts and appropriate toilet facilities	54	39.4	18	39.1	2	50.0
f. Provision of appropriate signage to facilitate students with a visual impairment	6	4.4	5	10.9	0	0.0
g. Provision of documentation in a variety of formats	14	10.2	4	8.7	0	0.0
h. Other	1	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
i. None	5	3.6	1	2.2	0	0.0
Total responses	137	100	46	100	4	100

In the case of HE staff, items d., e. and g. have been identified as the three top areas of improvement. Again, this is compatible with earlier HE perceptions of barriers. It suggests that significant physical and environmental improvements have been made. However, responses confirm that rather less progress has been made with information based matters.

Perceptions of strengths and weaknesses

Respondents were also asked to state their overall perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of their institution regarding issues of learning/disability support. These comments have been collated and will be made available to individual institutions in a manner that prevents the identification of individual respondents.

Many of the comments made are very particular to specific institutions. We do not therefore present a detailed summary of views here, save to say that the comments made have been helpful in interpreting some of the data presented in this chapter, and indeed the comments are much in keeping with the findings presented in the tables and charts within this chapter. In most respects therefore presenting a summary of textual comments, would merely repeat the messages already conveyed.

INCLUSIVE LEARNING ISSUES: STUDENT VIEWS

Introduction

Students who used learning/disability support services were given the opportunity to make an input into the research by participating in focus groups held in each institution or by means of a short questionnaire where focus groups were not possible. The students were keen to relate their experiences and express opinions on the learning/disability support service within their institution.

Focus Groups

The students were invited to take part in the research by their Learning Support Co-ordinator or by a member of the learning support team. Some 194 students took part in the 31 focus groups across 15 FE institutions and 1 HE institution. Although it would not have been appropriate to ask students in this environment to declare their disability it did become clear during discussions that students with a range of disabilities were involved and a significant number indicated they had hidden disabilities.

Ages ranged from 16 year olds to mature students. Students came from across a range of campuses and there was a mix of full-time and part-time students, there was also a spread of contributions from male and female students.

Survey

In the student survey across 1 FE institution and 4 HE institutions, 56 students took part. Students were at a variety of stages in their study and were studying a range of courses predominantly at primary degree level and most were full-time. Thirty six students were 24 years old or under and 20 were aged 25 and over. Some 30 disabilities were declared, dyslexia was by far the most common, with ME/ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Arthritis the next 2 most common disabilities.

Initial Contact

Only 5 FE students had been in contact with the learning/disability support team before they enrolled. The vast majority of students made contact when they were enrolling in September and often students were not aware of support available at this time.

Sixty percent of HE students were not aware of the support available from their institution before their referral or application. Such referral normally happens between the February and the August before an October start.

Documentation

In terms of HE documentation making reference to disability, the most common source was information received after application, according to 35% of the HE sample. Twenty eight percent of responses indicated the prospectus as an information source with reference made to disability, 24% the website and 12% of respondents indicated that course leaflets made reference to disability.

Input from FE students in focus groups indicated that they were not aware of the support offered by the institution until they made their first contact with the institution. Although some FE students did acknowledge mention of disability in the prospectus or on the website, most students found out about learning/disability support from the learning/disability support team. This supports the views of staff reported earlier; that more needs to be done to inform prospective students of services available prior to enrolment.

It is clear that institutions across both sectors are referring to disability and the support available on a wide range of their documentation. However, one measure of how effective this is, is how easily this is identified by people with a disability. The figures above would suggest that some progress still needs to be made in this area. Although there are efficient systems in place after initial contact to inform students of facilities and support systems available, this information must also be prominent on sources which students use to select an institution or a course. This includes particularly the prospectus, the website and course leaflets. Staff across both sectors also felt that communication and information sharing with prospective students should be strengthened as they list lack of awareness of general support available as one of the most significant barriers to students.

Pre-entry Guidance

Students were asked in the questionnaire to rate pre-entry guidance. Forty nine percent of HE students rated pre-entry guidance as good or very good, 31% rated it as OK and 20% rated it as poor or very poor. In terms of how pre-entry guidance could be improved 52% of respondents felt that more information with clear contact details of an identified person was most important. More information on course demands and curriculum content was the most important possible improvement for 17% of respondents and 9% identified early initial needs assessment as an area requiring attention, while 9% identified quicker processing of payment by Education and Library Boards as requiring attention. Quicker processing of results by institution, getting equipment earlier and support with obtaining medical evidence were each mentioned individually by 4% of respondents as areas which would improve this aspect of the service. These statistics show that 80% of HE students indicated that pre-entry guidance was OK or better. In terms of making this element of the service better, 69% of the suggestions made simply requested more specific information at an earlier stage. This is a reasonable request which would involve little additional cost.

HE students who took part in the focus groups were also positive about pre-entry guidance and described a straightforward process which met their needs.

In the FE sector some students in the focus groups were positive about pre-entry guidance while others did not feel that they had received such guidance. In terms of improving this aspect of the service, FE students felt that they would also benefit from more information about course content when enrolling and some would like to have met their Learning Support Co-ordinator or at least to have been told who they were and how they could be contacted.

Initial Needs Assessment

There was concern expressed by some students in the FE sector that they had to wait for a considerable amount of time before they were assessed and during this time they were expected to keep up with peers and to work without enabling technology and human support. Another cause for concern was the number of students who indicated that they had not known that they had dyslexia until they failed a written assessment or more seriously, the first year of their course. In general discussions about initial needs assessment, students in 5 FE institutions felt that this process was haphazard or non-existent. For some FE students the initial needs assessment process was a casual experience which did not fully take into account their needs, while other students were unsure if such a process existed.

Delays in initial assessment had the knock-on effect of a delay in receiving necessary equipment and support which could potentially seriously damage the academic progress of a student and could affect their morale. This is probably discriminatory. For example, we met a second year FE student who declared at the beginning of first year and was still waiting for a laptop, and a number of students who were waiting to hear the results of their assessment months after it had taken place.

In contrast students in the HE sector both during focus groups and in the survey, identified careful programmes of assessment which start up to 8 months before the student begins a course, facilitated by declaration of disability on the UCAS form. Early assessment may be wasteful if the student does not subsequently take up a place, however, disability support managers explained that these numbers are small and that this is a small price to pay for the advantages of early identification of additional needs.

Assessment should be a process of negotiation between the learner and those providing the support service. It should identify what the learner wishes to learn and their aspirations, how they best learn, and the support needed to enable them to do this. This must be considered in line with the academic and practical requirements of the course. There was concern in one external organisation (The Cedar Foundation) that students are not involved in this process and so provision does not always meet the exact needs of students. The RNID expressed concern that some initial assessment procedures in the FE sector were not appropriate to students with a hearing impairment and that support was not always in place for the beginning of a course, a problem identified elsewhere in the research.

When agreement is reached support should be in place at the beginning of the course. This would reduce inequality and help avoid feelings of alienation. As support needs change over time, they need to be reviewed and support adapted as appropriate.

Induction

Student induction is a feature of all FE and HE institutions. In some HE institutions this begins during the summer period when the campuses are not busy. Prospective students with a disability are invited to visit the campus that they will be attending. They are given a campus tour and elements of the initial assessment process take place including meeting a representative of the disability support team. In the FE sector induction to the institution normally begins at the commencement of the course. Input from students in focus groups and in questionnaires would suggest that the quality and breadth of the induction process is not standardised across the FE sector and occurs at a very busy time of the year when staff are under pressure and there is little opportunity for one-to-one time with students with a disability.

Learning and Teaching Support

Student views suggest considerable variance in the quality of on-going support available in the classroom. In both the FE and HE sectors, students gave examples of teaching which would suggest that the staff are well tuned-in to the needs of students and endeavoured to meet their academic and personal needs at every opportunity. This includes flexibility in assessment methods as well as style of teaching and addressing specific issues as they arise. The examples of good practice given by students included the distribution of notes a week in advance, the availability of lecture notes in a variety of formats and the use of individual tutorials to ensure that needs are being met. There was also evidence that in some cases course teams had been informed by the learning/disability support team of the needs of particular students and had made adjustments, some of which are outlined above.

However, students also cited examples of classroom situations which would suggest that the lecturer was either unwilling or did not have the skills or knowledge to provide equality of opportunity by meeting additional needs. Some examples were given by students of practices in the classroom that need urgent attention, for example, it was frequently the case in the FE sector that information regarding additional needs had not been shared with course teams, so students had to inform individual staff of their disability. In the HE sector however, 80% of students responding to the survey stated that lecturers were made aware of their disability by the institution this was also the experience shared by HE students in focus groups. There were also 2 examples of 1 FE student and 1 HE student who had each declared their disability (dyslexia) to teaching staff and the response suggested that the lecturer did not believe the

student or did not consider this condition to be debilitating and therefore refused to make adjustments to meet the additional needs of the student. In another example a member of staff told an FE student with dyslexia that they needed to spend more time learning to spell! This is supported by views in the staff chapter where 36.4% of FE academic staff and 26.4% of HE academic staff stated that when students with a disability are present, either teaching and learning practice is not affected or it is left entirely to the response of individual teachers.

Student responses indicate that there is a need for awareness raising for staff in all roles, including lecturers. With regard to dyslexia, the seriousness of the issues raised here and the lack of support evident would suggest that this training needs to start immediately and should be compulsory for all staff.

Types of Learning Support

The main types of learning support received in the HE sector were extra examination time which was identified by 21% of students, specialised equipment 8%, extended assignment deadlines 7%, a note-taker 7%, support sessions 7%, one-to-one tutorials 5% lecture materials in advance 4% and 4% parking permits. Other types of learning support offered to a small number of students included specialist software, extended library loans, allowances for spelling and grammar and support on demand. Twenty one percent of students with a disability stated that they were not receiving learning support of any kind. Almost all of the students attending the HE focus groups described some form of learning support to which they had access.

In the focus groups some FE students stated they were supported by their lecturers, and that their needs were being met. Other FE students in the focus groups were not happy with the quality of support they were getting in the classroom. Issues raised by dissatisfied students include lecturers not having time to discuss the student's needs even at the outset of the course. Some students complained about the attitude of teaching staff towards them and others simply got frustrated because teaching staff refused to make reasonable adjustments.

Student views would suggest that opportunities for reasonable adjustment in the classroom which require planning or a small amount of effort have been missed across both sectors. It would also seem that this classroom based support lacks co-ordination in both sectors. For example, students with dyslexia in some HE institutions are given allowances for spelling and grammar in assignments while in other HE institutions students are not given this support. No FE students indicated that they were given allowances for spelling and grammar. This indicates a need for clarification of policies and practices.

Alternative Assessment

Students were asked about the availability of alternative forms of assessment. Fifty three percent of HE students with a disability stated that they were offered no alternative, while 47% outlined the alternative assessment offered to them. The opportunity to do an assignment or take part in a recorded question and answer session rather than an examination relieved a lot of pressure and allowed one HE student to meet learning objectives. Many students listed reasonable adjustments rather than alternative forms of assessment including extensions to examination times and assignment deadlines and allowances for spelling and grammar. Some HE students were allowed to take examinations on a computer, to have assignments typed from audio, to dictate to a writer or to have an amanuensis. Other adjustments in the HE sector included taking the examination at home under supervision, the use of specialist software to complete assignments, the use of voice equipment and Dictaphones for lectures and taking open book examinations.

Some students across the FE sector indicated that they had experienced adjustments which included extensions to examination times and assignment deadlines. Students from 5 FE institutions indicated that lecturing staff did give them one-to-one support outside of class time,

however, no alternative forms of assessment were mentioned. Some organisations that support people with a disability, expressed concern that provision of accredited courses with strict time periods in which units must be completed disadvantaged disabled people who might require a longer time period to complete. This has implications for course funding.

There is clearly a wide variety of adjustment available in the HE sector with limited adjustment only available in the FE sector. However, more than half of HE students with a disability were not offered any of these alternatives, and nor were alternatives offered in all institutions. Only one example of an alternative form of assessment which maintains the academic rigour of the course but makes use of innovative strategic methods for measuring learning outcomes was given and this was in the HE sector.

Teaching Styles

In terms of adapting teaching styles to meet student needs in the HE sector, 21% of respondents indicated that they were not experiencing any adaptations to teaching styles by lecturers. Where it did occur, the most common adaptation was the availability of class notes in advance which was stated by 32% of students, while 16% of students identified the availability of class notes in multiple formats as the most important adaptation. Use of enabling technology was an important adaptation for 12% of respondents, 19% of HE students experienced some other adaptation of teaching style including the use of Power Point and video, on-line conferencing and a change to the speed of lectures. Students also appreciated the opportunity to move around the room, to get extra support during or after class, or to receive notes missed due to absence.

Some HE students attending focus groups expressed frustration that some lecturers refused to adapt their teaching style to meet their needs. Class notes in advance was the most common request while other students who frequently made use of enabling technology in other classes would have appreciated its use across the institute.

Some FE students taking part in focus groups indicated that they received lecture notes in advance or in a different format and several lecturers also made themselves available after class for one-to-one support.

While some adaptation of teaching style is common in HE, there is an opportunity for development in terms of use of enabling technology, power point, video and on-line conferencing. Each of these facilities is currently available in less than one fifth of lectures according to students. The British Dyslexia Association suggested that computer based learning techniques should be more widely used to support students with dyslexia. This is further evidence that HE and FE teaching staff could benefit from awareness raising which should include the importance to students of reasonable adjustments such as notes in advance and notes in a variety of formats.

Barriers to Learning

Fifty percent of students completing the HE questionnaire, stated that nothing in their institution hindered their learning. This was supported by comments which complemented the provision made by the institution to meet their additional needs as well as the support from the learning/disability support team.

Those issues which hindered learning were mentioned by only one or two students in each case either as part of the survey or the focus groups. These included many of the issues mentioned previously such as, the attitudes of lecturers, the long wait for equipment after assessment, the emphasis on reading, having to copy down notes at high speed, no proof reading service and notes not available in advance.

In the FE sector students raised issues which were also mentioned earlier. These included, delays in assessment, the non-allocation of specialised equipment and the lack of human support. The RNIB reinforced this view and suggest that initial needs assessment must happen earlier to ensure that support is in place at the start of the course.

Examination/Assignment Arrangements

Eighty six percent of HE students with a disability who took part in the survey and more than half of the FE and HE students taking part in focus groups have had special arrangement for examinations and/or assignments. These arrangements include extra time for examinations, a separate venue, breaks for a rest or to eat and the use of a computer to take the examination. In terms of assignments, the arrangements include extensions to deadlines and allowances for spelling and grammar for students with dyslexia. This evidence would indicate that the process of making special arrangements for examinations and assignments is well established across the HE sector and although there is room for improvement in some FE institutions, many FE institutions have established effective systems to provide this service.

However, there were examples of students who were denied extensions to assignment deadlines or refused a scribe without an explanation. Three students explained that extended time did not suit them as they already had difficulty sitting for 3 hours. Two FE students indicated that examinations officers were sometimes not informed of additional time allocation so they did not get their entitlement in that examination.

Ancillary and Administrative Support Staff

Contact with ancillary and support staff was common among students with a disability. The support from this group of staff was highly valued by these students and there were numerous examples of student contact with these staff and how they had met the needs of students with a disability. This clearly demonstrated best practice. There was an example of a caretaker who collected a student who was a wheelchair user and pushed them to another campus at a particular time each week because the journey involved a hill which the student could not manage unassisted. There were examples of administrative staff who took on the responsibility of collecting lecture notes in advance from tutors, having the format changed and then getting them to the student and their interpreter or note-taker in advance of the class. On our visits to institutions the research team also observed canteen staff who had taken the time to learn the names of students with a disability, who assisted them where and when necessary with the use of trays and counting money for payment as well as reorganising furniture to facilitate the inclusion of students who were wheelchair users. There were also examples of ancillary staff ensuring that students with physical disabilities were assisted in moving around the building and that they had smooth access from buses to classrooms on time.

Education and Library Board Support

Again and again students outlined the importance of the support they receive from Education and Library Boards, for example one HE student has a personal carer for the time they spend at the university and a taxi to and from the campus every day paid for by the local Education & Library Board.

There was however some concern as mentioned earlier about the delay in needs being identified and the process of allocating the support required. Some students felt that it would be useful if the institution could step in and make this provision in the interim. There are however some difficulties with this as outlined in the institution review because institutions often find it difficult to build up a bank of central resources as funding follows the student.

Peer Support

There was widespread satisfaction with the quality of relationships with other students. There was evidence of students being helpful and caring, for example assisting with the writing of lecture notes, helping to resolve mobility issues and simply carrying books. Students expressed relief that the negative experiences they had sometimes had at school such as bullying and isolation were not their experience of FE and HE institutions. Some FE students mentioned close friendships which they had developed with their peers which extended beyond the college day. These relationships were a very important aspect of their social lives. Students with a disability gave examples of how their peers had developed and grown in confidence in terms of accepting their disability and their willingness to help in any way they could. It may be fair to suggest that the presence of students with a disability enhances the overall learning experience of students in general.

Discrete Provision

Many of the FE institutions provide learning opportunities for people with severe learning difficulties where they attend special classes and remain with their peers. There is some evidence from students and staff that the curriculum in discrete provision in some institutions is relatively static and students sometimes repeat the same course for a number of years. The achievement of educational goals should remain as important as the social element of students getting involved in all aspects of college life.

There were also examples of good practice in this area, for example some students who initially enrolled on discrete provision, on the completion of the course then progressed onto mainstream courses at level one or 2. There is also some excellent work being done between FE institutions and special schools which ultimately makes the transfer from second level to third level education a much smoother one. The students on discrete provision were very positive about the course they were on and the support they were receiving.

The RNIB suggested another role for discrete provision for students with a visual impairment who are attending FE in very small numbers. They believe that this should be an initiative to address a number of issues currently faced by these students, including the availability of notes in a variety of formats.

Learning Support Co-ordinators

Students in focus groups and on questionnaires praised the work of the Learning Support Co-ordinators and the learning/disability support teams. Learning/disability support staff were available on-demand, students could contact them in person, by phone or by e-mail and they were confident that they would get an immediate response. In some institutions co-ordinators provided students with regular opportunities to express concern and to raise issues as well as providing support for the disability. Students very obviously depend on this level of support and are also aware that the Learning Support Co-ordinator sometimes gives them help outside their normal time commitment.

Student Reflection

Students who contributed to the research were very keen to take part, but not primarily to complain or to identify particular staff who lacked the skills or who were unwilling to offer support. Rather, they wished to express their frustration about the fact that many of the issues which prevented inclusion in the learning environment could be addressed with some planning, or by simple awareness raising. A number of students were willing to contribute to this process to enable institutions to enhance the appropriateness of support and training.

CONCLUSIONS

Scale of engagement

1. The incidence of working age people in Northern Ireland who have a disability is estimated at 20% and 10.5% of people in Northern Ireland aged between 18 and 30 have a disability.
2. Currently, FE institutions estimate that they recruit from under 1% to approximately 4% of their students from amongst those with a disability.
3. Currently, conventional HE institutions estimate that they recruit approximately 2% of their students from amongst those with a disability. However, The Open University in Northern Ireland estimates that it recruits approximately 6.8% of its students from amongst those with a disability.
4. Within the FE sector 60.1% of academic staff and 36.7% of administration/support staff claim to be in contact with students with a disability.
5. Within the HE sector 52.2% of academic staff and 54.6% of administration/support staff claim to be in contact with students with a disability.

Discrete provision

6. All FE institutions, but no HE institution, provide discrete provision in addition to mainstream provision for students with a disability.
7. In some FE institutions there are no educational goals nor progression routes associated with discrete provision.
8. In other FE institutions students on discrete provision have clear goals and progression is built in with some students moving onto mainstream courses.
9. The great majority of discrete provision is at level 0.

Funding

10. Within FE, 55% of students with a disability are funded by ASF or DSA, 42% are funded by enhanced FTE funding and 3% from other sources.
11. Within HE, 96% are funded via DSA and 4% from other sources.
12. Both the FE and HE sectors have concerns about current funding levels.
13. Disability support organisations believe the HE sector is better funded than the FE sector for students with a disability.
14. Both FE and HE staff accept that securing funds for the support of students with a disability is a real priority. They also believe that their institution provides co-ordinated funding for students with a disability.

Policy and planning

15. Some institutions may lack the necessary information base to engage in fully effective forward planning
16. There is considerable variation in the extent to which disability issues are addressed in key policy, strategy, marketing and briefing materials across FE and HE institutions.
17. Although there is reference made to disability in some documentation across both sectors, this is not widely accessed by students in either the FE or HE sectors.
18. Further developments will be needed in some institutions to comply with forthcoming SENDO legislation.
19. There is considerable variation in the use of disability experts to help inform the development of policy and planning documents.
20. Most Boards of Governors believe their institution gives high priority to disability issues.
21. Academic staff in both sectors believe they are aware of the policies and procedures of their own institution.
22. Students within focus groups expressed a strong desire to provide advice to institutions as part of forward planning procedures.

Management of service

23. Although the FE sector has the greatest variety of types and levels of courses, it is the HE sector that has the clearest processes and procedures in place for students with a disability.
24. The HE sector is more consistent than the FE sector in providing adequate full-time management of learning/disability support services.
25. In the majority of FE institutions, Learning Support Co-ordinators operate on a part-time basis from as little as 0 allocated hours per week, up to 20.
26. Learning Support Co-ordinators in the FE sector are highly valued by students with a disability. Students appreciated the range and level of support, Learning Support Co-ordinators provided on demand.
27. In some FE institutions, services are managed by untrained staff.
28. The HE sector is consistent in locating the management of the service within the academic community. The FE sector on the other hand varies considerably, with some institutions placing management within the administration community.
29. HE institutions are more likely than FE institutions to have a member of their senior management team involved in the management of learning/disability support.
30. Staff from both the FE and HE sectors believe that responsibility for students with a disability is delegated to appropriate staff and that their institution has a co-ordinated approach to dealing with students with a disability.
31. Staff in most institutions believe that there is a well managed central support service for students with a disability.
32. Both academic and administration/support staff believe that they are often left to decide how best to provide assistance to students with a disability.

Physical access issues

33. Major advances have been made in recent years regarding physical access for students with many types of disabilities. However, for some disabilities, such as sight impairment, there remain considerable needs, suggesting further audits of provision may be helpful.
34. There is a lack of consistency within the FE sector regarding reviewing access needs, and providing effective feedback channels for the reporting of needs.
35. Staff in both sectors recognise that teaching premises provide suitable access to most students with a disability.

Resourcing

36. Responses by the FE sector to the Disability Discrimination Act, the Tomlinson Report and the forthcoming SENDO legislation has been very varied. (For example, only a minority of institutions have developed staff awareness raising initiatives).
37. In contrast the HE sector has responded both more consistently and more comprehensively.
38. The availability of designated space and resources for those engaged in providing disability support varies across all types of institutions, although the HE sector appears to have a generally stronger resource base.
39. A wide range of basic needs were identified by the FE sector. These included the need for dedicated, specialist staff (the most regularly cited need), dedicated rooms, assistive technology, staff training, assessment funding, and out-centre resources.
40. A higher percentage of HE academic staff than is the case with FE academic staff believe that they have appropriate facilities and equipment for their work with students with a disability.
41. HE sector needs were predominantly focused on qualitative improvement. They in the main revolved around staff development for academic staff, some types of physical resources and financial support for part-time and international students.

Recent improvements

42. Over the last 2 years FE staff have noted the following as the 3 most significant improvements made within their institution and aimed at assisting students with a disability:
 - a. Provision of ramps, lifts and appropriate toilet facilities.
 - b. Appropriate car parking facilities.
 - c. Provision of appropriate signage to facilitate students with a visual impairment.
43. Over the last 2 years HE staff have noted the following as the 3 most significant improvements made within their institution and aimed at assisting students with a disability:
 - a. Provision of ramps, lifts and appropriate toilet facilities.
 - b. Appropriate car parking facilities.
 - c. Provision of documentation in a variety of formats.

Staff development

44. In the majority of institutions there is a coordinated effort to keep staff informed of developments in the area of disability.
45. However, specialist staff development opportunities vary considerable amongst institutions, including in the areas of the use of specialist equipment, specialised computer software and enabling technology.
46. Within the FE sector 43.3% of academic staff and 25.5% of administration/support staff claim to have received staff training during the last 2 years in relation to supporting students with disabilities.
47. Within the HE sector 34.3% of academic staff and 40.9% of administration/support staff claim to have received staff training during the last 2 years in relation to supporting students with a disability.
48. Many staff in the FE sector claim to be either unaware of staff development opportunities or to believe that such staff development is not a high priority.
49. A smaller but still significant number of HE staff have similar views.

Pre-course

50. Across both the FE and HE sectors, the majority of responding students were not aware of support available at their institution before enrolling or applying to a course.
51. According to students across both sectors, information about support available is often communicated after initial contact with the institution.
52. In the HE sector, student questionnaire respondents felt that pre-entry guidance was very good, good or ok in 80% of cases, while students in focus groups gave a more mixed response.
53. HE academic staff were significantly more positive than FE academic staff in relation to believing that they were always appropriately briefed in advance regarding students with a disability.
54. Across both sectors, students request more information about courses and specific details relating to the Learning Support Co-ordinator or Disability Support Manager, including contact details.

Teaching and Learning

55. Induction for students with a disability, normally takes place in all HE institutions during the summer period, when institutions are less busy.
56. Induction for students with a disability, normally takes place in all FE institutions during the first week of the course when institutions are very busy.
57. Students were able to provide examples of good practice in the classroom across both sectors. Such examples referred to teachers planning ahead, being flexible and making adjustments.
58. Students were also able to provide examples of poor practice in the classroom in both sectors, with some teachers being unwilling or unable to meet additional needs.
59. Although students recognise a wide range of learning support is available, they believe it is not consistent, and varies considerably among and within institutions.

60. According to students in the HE sector, there is evidence of changes in teaching styles in some cases, but the situation is very patchy.
61. According to students in the FE sector, although some staff gave additional support, such as providing handouts in advance, they did not adapt their teaching styles within the classroom.
62. The vast majority of academic staff in both sectors do recognise that it is appropriate to change their regular way of working to meet the needs of students with a disability.
63. Some teachers in both sectors do not see learning/disability support as their responsibility.
64. FE staff are likely to believe that changes in teaching and learning are entirely left to individual teaching staff within their institution.
65. HE staff are most likely to believe that their department has a co-ordinated approach to supporting the teaching and learning needs of students with a disability.

Barriers to learning

66. According to students in the HE sector, the main barriers to learning relate to classroom issues such as attitudes of lecturers, the emphasis on reading, and notes not being available in advance. A small number of students were also dissatisfied by the long wait for equipment.
67. For students in the FE sector, the main barriers to learning also included delays in assessment and the delay in allocation of support.
68. For staff in the FE sector the 3 principle barriers to student engagement with Further Education were identified as:
 - a. Lack of awareness of general support available.
 - b. Lack of confidence.
 - c. Lack of awareness of curriculum support facilities available.
69. For staff in the HE sector the 3 principle barriers to student engagement with Further Education were identified as:
 - a. Lack of awareness of general support available.
 - b. Lack of confidence.
 - c. Funding.

Referral

70. The vast majority of institutions believe that current referral systems fail to identify all students in need of specialist support.
71. The SENDO draft code of practice requires institutions to encourage disclosure, and to explain to all students the benefits of disclosure.
72. Self-referral is the most dominant system at present. The FE sector more than the HE sector, also has engagement with referrals from other agencies.
73. Enrolment procedures mean that the FE sector has much less time than the HE sector to use the time between enrolment and course start up to put support systems in place.

Initial needs assessment

74. There are no common standards required of staff in relation to initial needs assessment, and as a consequence there is a wide variety of practice amongst institutions.
75. Only around half of FE and HE academic staff believe that they are aware of initial needs assessment procedures.
76. The HE sector seems to have clearer and more robust initial assessment procedures than is found across the FE sector.
77. The FE sector works more regularly than the HE sector with a range of specialist support organisations.
78. According to students, in some FE institutions the initial needs assessment process is ad hoc, casual, or non-existent.
79. According to students, in some FE institutions the initial needs assessment process does not take place until after the course is started, which has implications for the provision of support.

80. Some external organisations which support disabled people expressed concern regarding the initial needs assessment process in the FE sector.
81. According to students, in the HE sector, the initial needs assessment process starts early, and support is normally in place at the beginning of the course.
82. All institutions have a policy of creating an individual support plan following initial assessment.
83. Institutions are committed to providing the necessary support required to enable disabled students to effectively engage in learning.
84. Both FE and HE staff are likely to believe that there is a co-ordinated approach across their institution to the initial needs assessment of students.

Assessment

85. All FE and HE institutions have special examination and assessment policies for students with a disability. These should lead to standardised practice within each institution.
86. According to students, in both sectors staff tend to make adjustments to current forms of assessment rather than making available alternative forms of assessment.
87. According to students, a substantial number of students with a disability across both sectors were not offered an alternative form of assessment when they experienced difficulties. However, 86% of HE students and a majority of students in our sample have had special arrangements made for examinations and/or assignments.
88. Staff believe that their institution has a centralised system for the co-ordination of special examination and assessment arrangements. However, FE staff are much more likely to believe that arrangements are dealt with in an ad hoc, on-request basis.

Other types of support

89. Ancillary staff and support staff are highly valued by both FE and HE students with a disability. There are many examples of excellent practice by these staff across both sectors.
90. Students with a disability in both sectors were very appreciative of the support they receive from their peers.
91. Students appreciated the support provided by Education and Library Boards.
92. There was concern among students about the time lapse between the beginning of the course and support being put in place.

Quality assurance

93. There are a variety of standards in use for quality assurance purposes, with most institutions adopting at least one.
94. All HE institutions and most FE institutions have some process of capturing student feedback to feed into considerations regarding learning/disability support services.
95. The use of the results of student feedback are put to a variety of purposes, but there does not appear to be a consistent use of feedback across the FE sector in particular.

Communication and Networking

96. There is considerable variation in external networking ranging from some institutions with good relationships with external agencies and regular attendance at conferences and events, to others with little if any networking activity.
97. Some external organisations indicated a desire to provide assistance and expertise to the FE sector to help strengthen provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Prior to listing recommendations, it is important to make some general observations that establish a clear context for their consideration.

The context

The mechanisms and processes through which students with a disability become engaged in learning, often involves the complex interaction of a range of factors. Effective inclusion will therefore require a whole institution and strategic approach. The diversity of issues to be managed include ensuring that the institution values all learners and staff, puts the learner at the centre of procedures, fosters reflective teaching strategies, is professional, transparent and equitable in its standards of service to students with a disability, and values diversity. All of this implies a fiduciary relationship between the institution and its students, and this has profound implications for the culture of educational institutions.

We have therefore aimed at constructing recommendations that will contribute to establishing the type of culture required by the forthcoming SENDO legislation. We would also echo the view of Tomlinson, that developing good practice in relation to students with a disability, will enhance services for all students.

In addition to a concern for the creation of effective institutional cultures, there are three areas of practical concern that also provide a context for our recommendations.

First, it is important to recognise that some recommendations have implications for government and DEL, and others for institutional policy and practice. It will therefore be important to ensure the following recommendations are discussed at a senior level both within government and also within the FE and HE sectors.

Second, it is important to understand that there is considerable variation in institutional readiness for the forthcoming SENDO legislation. In particular, practice varies considerably within the further education sector. Therefore, these recommendations must be considered in the particular context of each institution. They should not be implemented in a formulaic way that assumes all institutions are the same.

Third, the facilitators on the next phase of this project, which will involve constructive engagement with the institutions to ensure they are fully prepared for the forthcoming legislation, must ensure the following.

- a. That they draw up a programme of support in concert with each institution which reflects each institution's specific needs. This may be assisted by reviewing each institution's set of summary tables for the staff survey. Such materials will be made available by the researchers.
- b. The programme of support should incorporate in an appropriate manner each of the following recommendations.
- c. The facilitators must ensure they can deploy the appropriate range of consultancy, facilitation and training skills that will be needed to support the implementation of the recommendations.

Recommendations

With the above comments kept in mind, our recommendations are as follows.

1. **Funding.** While both FE and HE institutions expressed concerns regarding the level of funding, it is noted that the system HE have for the assessment of need and allocation of funding (DSA) is more structured, equitable and ultimately track-able than that within FE (ASF). At present therefore the HE system represents best practice. Given this we would recommend that a review be carried out to explore the following, bearing in mind students' rights under SENDO:-

- i Harmonisation of systems for assessment of need between FE and HE providers to ensure equity for all students.
 - ii Levels of funding reflecting assessed student need in relation to the course of study regardless if this is in FE or HE.
2. **Disclosure.** Given the need under the draft SENDO Code of Practice to explain the benefits of disclosure and to encourage disclosure, and also given the belief of staff that many students under current arrangements are not disclosing disabilities, we recommend the following.
 - i Each institution should have a clear internal referral system prepared and published to ensure staff are able to mobilise appropriate internal support following disclosure.
 - ii Awareness raising amongst staff should be undertaken to ensure all staff are aware of the importance of encouraging disclosure.
 - iii Each institution should ensure that induction briefing materials regarding the benefits of disclosure are available to all students.
 - iv Each institution should ensure there is dedicated and private space available in appropriate places to facilitate confidential disclosure.
3. **Internal review.** There is considerable variation in the extent to which disability issues are addressed in institutional documentation. There is also varying degrees of commitment in terms of management and the resourcing of internal expertise to support students with disabilities. Furthermore, the challenges of SENDO are so far reaching that institutions must have an integrated whole institution approach. We therefore recommend the following.
 - i Internal reviews of current strategy, policy, marketing and operational documents should be undertaken to ensure that an effective service is provided to disabled students.
 - ii Internal reviews of current management arrangements should be undertaken to ensure that clear responsibilities are established from senior levels of institutional management, down to front line teaching and support staff.
 - iii Specific attention should be given to the management of learning support in institutions. In particular, staff in these roles must be given the appropriate time for their important function, and must have the appropriate authority and expertise to ensure that their involvement is effective.
4. **Continuous review.** It is important to move beyond the ad hoc and haphazard approach of some institutions towards the development and deployment of procedures and resources. This is the responsibility of senior management.

The development and quality of service requires that it is subject to on-going review and best practice shows that this should be informed by a dialogue with disabled students and external support organisations. To assist with this task we recommend the following.

- i. Each institution should establish an advisory review group consisting of the Learning Support Coordinator, representatives of students with a disability, and representatives from specialist external agencies.
- ii. The advisory review group should be asked to prepare an independent report each year prior to the preparation of the annual Institute Development Plan. The report should recommend areas for priority development with the aim of enhancing support for students with disabilities.

5. **Staff awareness.** It is clear that a significant number of teaching staff are not fully aware of their responsibilities regarding working with students with a disability. This was sometimes caused by lack of confidence or a lack of skill in terms of meeting the needs of students with very complex needs, in other instances teaching staff simply did not see the support of disabled students as part of their role as a teacher. Many staff themselves also recognise they are not fully aware of all relevant procedures and policies. We therefore recommend the following.
 - i. Each institution should establish an awareness raising programme aimed at all teaching, management and support staff, in relation to forthcoming SENDO legislation, and the institution's own policies and procedures and the changing needs of our learners.
 - ii. Awareness raising should be occupationally focused (for example, ensuring teaching staff and support staff are aware of their requirement to deliver the cultural changes necessary for SENDO).

6. **Staff development.** When staff have received appropriate training there is clear evidence that this leads to good practice, however, many staff have not received appropriate training to enable them to discharge their responsibilities towards students with a disability. We therefore recommend the following.
 - i. Priority should be given to ensuring that appropriate development opportunities are made available to staff, aimed at enhancing their expertise in dealing with the learning needs of students with a disability and the individual needs of all students.
 - ii. Teaching staff should, for example, have the opportunity to develop their skills in relation to:
 1. Deploying an appropriate range of teaching styles.
 2. Using assistive technologies.
 3. Designing appropriate assessment methods.
 - iii. Learning support staff should, for example, have the opportunity to develop their skills in relation to:
 1. Initial assessment
 2. Guidance and counselling
 3. Policy and procedure development
 - iv. Support/administrative staff should, for example, have the opportunity to develop their skills in relation to:
 1. Communication skills
 2. Practical support skills related to their role

7. **Marketing and pre-entry materials.** Given the views of staff and students that there is a lack of effective information at pre-entry stage, and that this creates an initial barrier to learning, we make the following recommendations.
 - i. All marketing materials should be reviewed to ensure positive statements are present regarding the support available to students with disabilities.
 - ii. Institutions should ensure all guidance agencies in Northern Ireland are appropriately briefed on support services for disabled students.
 - iii. Institutions should be encouraged to agree on appropriate standards for website design, to facilitate ease of access and use. Such standards should take account of disability issues.

8. **Quality assurance.** Within the FE sector there are a variety of standards, including none, being used by learning support staff to benchmark the quality of their work with students with a disability. We therefore recommend that,
 - i. The sector should aim at agreeing a common and robust standard for learning support work that fully meets the needs of SENDO.
 - ii. The Education Training Inspectorate (ETI) should review IQRS documentation to ensure that the curricular quality process drives best practice in relation to students with a disability

9. **Networking.** Networking is recognised as one method of ensuring effective benchmarking. Currently there is a considerable variation in the extent to which institutions effectively network both within their own sector and also with external agencies. We recommend the following.
- i. All FE institutions should ensure their Learning Support Coordinator is enabled to attend the Learning Support Coordinators' Forum.
 - ii. The forum should include within its business the sharing of good practice, and reviewing of emerging issues.
 - iii. The Learning Support Forum should have an advisory role in relation to policy and best practice.
 - iv. The forum should consider inviting attendance from HE sector managers of disability services, and particularly when the agenda addresses emerging issues and the sharing of good practice.
 - v. All institutions should review, with the prospect of developing, their contacts with external agencies, including those within the voluntary sector. This should be undertaken with the aim of developing an effective network of external expertise that can contribute to the development of institutional expertise. There are currently in existence a number of forums and networks within the FE sector which could be proactively used in order to co-ordinate and facilitate any further programme of staff development which might be acquired to meet the needs of SENDO as detailed in this report.

APPENDICES

Appendix of Tables

FE TABLES

Table 24: FE Staff contact with students with disabilities, by gender

Contact	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	69	48.9	148	57.4	217	54.4
No	68	48.2	100	38.8	168	42.1
No response	4	2.8	10	3.9	14	3.5
Totals	141	100	258	100	399	100

Table 25: FE Training in relation to students with disabilities, by gender

Contact	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	49	34.8	105	40.7	154	38.6
No	91	64.5	146	56.6	237	59.4
No response	1	0.7	7	2.7	8	2.0
Totals	141	100	258	100	399	100

Table 26: FE Mean scores, by gender

Statement	All responses			Male			Female		
	Count	Mean	Std Dev	Count	Mean	Std Dev	Count	Mean	Std Dev
1. Fully aware of policies and procedures.	384	6.80	2.55	138	6.88	2.49	246	6.76	2.58
2. Always briefed in advance of work with a student.	350	5.47	3.45	126	5.40	3.27	224	5.52	3.56
3. Fully aware of initial assessment procedures.	372	5.45	3.25	135	5.44	3.04	237	5.45	3.37
4. Appropriate facilities and equipment.	354	5.94	2.93	133	5.83	2.75	221	6.00	3.03
5. Appropriate professional support from experts.	356	5.68	3.11	133	5.68	3.06	223	5.68	3.14
6. Left to me to decide how best to work with student.	349	4.60	3.47	129	4.19	3.08	220	4.83	3.67
7. Not appropriate to change our way of working.	354	2.09	2.70	131	2.27	2.57	223	1.98	2.77
8. More should be done to support students.	371	7.25	2.81	137	7.75	2.43	234	6.95	2.97
9. I've been involved in a successful support approach.	346	5.10	3.76	130	4.91	3.80	216	5.21	3.73

Table 27: FE Views on how organisation deals with students, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Nothing seems planned or coordinated when dealing with students with disabilities.	41	5.2	16	5.6	25	4.9
b. Responsibility for students with disabilities is delegated to appropriate staff.	259	32.5	87	30.5	172	33.7
c. There is a coordinated approach to dealing with students with disabilities.	205	25.8	78	27.4	127	24.9
d. Management regularly review the staff needed to support students.	79	9.9	28	9.8	51	10.0
e. Management ensure good practice is adopted throughout the organisation.	105	13.2	39	13.7	66	12.9
f. My organisation gives a high priority in its future planning to the needs of students with disabilities.	107	13.4	37	13.0	70	13.7
Total responses	796	100	285	100	511	100

Table 28: FE Views on how organisation deals with students, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Nothing seems planned or coordinated when dealing with students with disabilities.	32	5.4	7	3.7	2	15.4
b. Responsibility for students with disabilities is delegated to appropriate staff.	189	31.9	63	33.0	7	53.8
c. There is a coordinated approach to dealing with students with disabilities.	156	26.4	47	24.6	2	15.4
d. Management regularly review the staff needed to support students.	60	10.1	19	9.9	0	0.0
e. Management ensure good practice is adopted throughout the organisation.	78	13.2	26	13.6	1	7.7
f. My organisation gives a high priority in its future planning to the needs of students with disabilities.	77	13.0	29	15.2	1	7.7
Total responses	592	100	191	100	13	100

Table 29: FE Views on management approach, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. I am not aware of my line management giving any priority to disability issues.	40	6.3	12	5.3	28	6.8
b. Disability support is managed in isolation from everything else.	84	13.1	29	12.7	55	13.4
c. There is a well managed central support service for students with disabilities.	234	36.6	83	36.4	151	36.7
d. Management keep me informed of good practice in supporting students with disabilities.	72	11.3	23	10.1	49	11.9
e. Disability support services provide good support and advice to everyone in my area of work in relation to dealing with students with disabilities.	107	16.7	44	19.3	63	15.3
f. Staff with expertise in disability contribute to future planning in our department.	102	16.0	37	16.2	65	15.8
Total responses	639	100	228	100	411	100

Table 30: FE Views on management approach, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. I am not aware of my line management giving any priority to disability issues.	27	5.6	12	8.0	1	12.5
b. Disability support is managed in isolation from everything else.	72	15.0	10	6.7	2	25.0
c. There is a well managed central support service for students with disabilities.	169	35.1	62	41.3	3	37.5
d. Management keep me informed of good practice in supporting students with disabilities.	54	11.2	16	10.7	2	25.0
e. Disability support services provide good support and advice to everyone in my area of work in relation to dealing with students with disabilities.	86	17.9	21	14.0	0	0.0
f. Staff with expertise in disability contribute to future planning in our department.	73	15.2	29	19.3	0	0.0
Total responses	481	100	150	100	8	100

Table 31: FE Views on access and support, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. The buildings and facilities in my place of work are entirely unsuitable for students with disabilities.	25	3.9	13	5.8	12	2.9
b. Some parts of our buildings are accessible to those with physical disabilities, and there is some specialist assistance such as signage in Braille.	197	31.0	68	30.4	129	31.3
c. Access and related issues are well co-ordinated throughout my organisation.	172	27.0	62	27.7	110	26.7
d. Accessibility issues are part of our planning, including for one off events.	110	17.3	43	19.2	67	16.3
e. Multi-format material is available to support all events and courses.	41	6.4	12	5.4	29	7.0
f. All aspects of access to education are included in forward planning.	91	14.3	26	11.6	65	15.8
Total responses	636	100	224	100	412	100

Table 32: FE Views on access and support, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. The buildings and facilities in my place of work are entirely unsuitable for students with disabilities.	19	4.1	5	3.1	1	6.7
b. Some parts of our buildings are accessible to those with physical disabilities, and there is some specialist assistance such as signage in Braille.	136	29.6	56	34.8	5	33.3
c. Access and related issues are well co-ordinated throughout my organisation.	128	27.8	42	26.1	2	13.3
d. Accessibility issues are part of our planning, including for one off events.	85	18.5	23	14.3	2	13.3
e. Multi-format material is available to support all events and courses.	27	5.9	12	7.5	2	13.3
f. All aspects of access to education are included in forward planning.	65	14.1	23	14.3	3	20.0
Total responses	460	100	161	100	15	100

Table 33: FE Views on wider organisation support, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Support staff, such as canteen and janitorial staff, are not equipped to assist students with disabilities.	59	9.9	20	9.6	39	10.0
b. Support staff are expected to help, but it is left to them to decide how best to provide assistance.	155	25.9	59	28.2	96	24.7
c. There is a central support, including staff development, to enable support staff to meet the needs of students with disabilities.	141	23.6	49	23.4	92	23.7
d. Support departments plan and develop provision of students with disabilities.	104	17.4	35	16.7	69	17.7
e. There is a systematic sharing of good practice amongst all support departments.	72	12.0	21	10.0	51	13.1
f. The organisation includes support departments in the forward planning of disability policies.	67	11.2	25	12.0	42	10.8
Total responses	598	100	209	100	389	100

Table 34: FE Views on wider organisation support, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Support staff, such as canteen and janitorial staff, are not equipped to assist students with disabilities.	39	8.8	19	13.0	1	12.5
b. Support staff are expected to help, but it is left to them to decide how best to provide assistance.	116	26.1	37	25.3	2	25.0
c. There is a central support, including staff development, to enable support staff to meet the needs of students with disabilities.	109	24.5	29	19.9	3	37.5
d. Support departments plan and develop provision of students with disabilities.	78	17.6	25	17.1	1	12.5
e. There is a systematic sharing of good practice amongst all support departments.	51	11.5	20	13.7	1	12.5
f. The organisation includes support departments in the forward planning of disability policies.	51	11.5	16	11.0	0	0.0
Total responses	444	100	146	100	8	100

Table 35: FE Views on examination and assessment support, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. There is no special examination or assessment support for students with disabilities.	6	1.1	3	1.5	3	0.9
b. Special examination and assessment arrangements are dealt with in an ad hoc, on request basis.	130	23.7	44	22.2	86	24.5
c. There is a centralized system for the co-ordination of special examination and assessment arrangements.	156	28.4	53	26.8	103	29.3
d. Special examination and assessment needs are identified and communicated at the outset of the student's course.	153	27.9	59	29.8	94	26.8
e. Course teams plan for multiple examination and assessment methods.	49	8.9	20	10.1	29	8.3
f. Differentiation of examination and assessment arrangements has become part of standard practice.	55	10.0	19	9.6	36	10.3
Total responses	549	100	198	100	351	100

Table 36: FE Views on examination and assessment support, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. There is no special examination or assessment support for students with disabilities.	6	1.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
b. Special examination and assessment arrangements are dealt with in an ad hoc, on request basis.	105	24.7	22	19.3	3	30.0
c. There is a centralized system for the co-ordination of special examination and assessment arrangements.	116	27.3	37	32.5	3	30.0
d. Special examination and assessment needs are identified and communicated at the outset of the student's course.	114	26.8	37	32.5	2	20.0
e. Course teams plan for multiple examination and assessment methods.	40	9.4	8	7.0	1	10.0
f. Differentiation of examination and assessment arrangements has become part of standard practice.	44	10.4	10	8.8	1	10.0
Total responses	425	100	114	100	10	100

Table 37: FE Views on teaching and learning, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Teaching and learning practice is not affected by the presence of students with disabilities.	32	5.7	13	6.6	19	5.2
b. Changes in teaching and learning are entirely left to individual teaching staff.	156	27.7	59	29.8	97	26.5
c. There is a coordinated approach in our department to supporting the teaching and learning needs of students with disabilities.	122	21.6	45	22.7	77	21.0
d. The needs of students with disabilities are integrated across the entire curriculum.	74	13.1	22	11.1	52	14.2
e. Learning and teaching resources are available in a variety of formats to support a range of needs and learning styles.	114	20.2	38	19.2	76	20.8
f. Support tools are integrated across the curriculum, and staff are trained in the use of ILT and enabling technologies.	66	11.7	21	10.6	45	12.3
Total responses	564	100	198	100	366	100

Table 38: FE Views on teaching and learning, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Teaching and learning practice is not affected by the presence of students with disabilities.	25	5.4	6	6.8	1	6.7
b. Changes in teaching and learning are entirely left to individual teaching staff.	143	31.0	9	10.2	4	26.7
c. There is a coordinated approach in our department to supporting the teaching and learning needs of students with disabilities.	96	20.8	22	25.0	4	26.7
d. The needs of students with disabilities are integrated across the entire curriculum.	56	12.1	18	20.5	0	0.0
e. Learning and teaching resources are available in a variety of formats to support a range of needs and learning styles.	93	20.2	18	20.5	3	20.0
f. Support tools are integrated across the curriculum, and staff are trained in the use of ILT and enabling technologies.	48	10.4	15	17.0	3	20.0
Total responses	461	100	88	100	15	100

Table 39: FE Views on staff development, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. I am not aware of any staff development programmes relating to supporting students with disabilities.	88	16.8	23	12.0	65	19.6
b. Some training is available, but it is not a high priority.	140	26.7	52	27.1	88	26.5
c. There is a coordinated approach to the provision of staff training in disability issues.	102	19.5	41	21.4	61	18.4
d. Staff training for all staff is available from expert trainers.	81	15.5	33	17.2	48	14.5
e. There is a coordinated approach to the identification of staff training needs.	76	14.5	31	16.1	45	13.6
f. Accredited training is available, and training plans are systematically developed for staff.	37	7.1	12	6.3	25	7.5
Total responses	524	100	192	100	332	100

Table 40: FE Views on staff development, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. I am not aware of any staff development programmes relating to supporting students with disabilities.	57	14.5	29	24.6	2	16.7
b. Some training is available, but it is not a high priority.	115	29.2	21	17.8	4	33.3
c. There is a coordinated approach to the provision of staff training in disability issues.	74	18.8	27	22.9	1	8.3
d. Staff training for all staff is available from expert trainers.	65	16.5	14	11.9	2	16.7
e. There is a coordinated approach to the identification of staff training needs.	56	14.2	18	15.3	2	16.7
f. Accredited training is available, and training plans are systematically developed for staff.	27	6.9	9	7.6	1	8.3
Total responses	394	100	118	100	12	100

Table 41: FE Views on initial assessment, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. There are no initial assessment services available to identify or support students with disabilities.	16	2.9	7	3.5	9	2.6
b. Initial assessment is limited and ad hoc.	85	15.7	36	18.2	49	14.2
c. There is a coordinated approach across the organisation to the initial assessment of students.	202	37.2	77	38.9	125	36.2
d. There is a purposeful and systematic use of initial assessment results across the organisation.	92	16.9	36	18.2	56	16.2
e. Specialist support is available to enable the effective use of initial assessment results across the curriculum.	98	18.0	27	13.6	71	20.6
f. An overall evaluation of initial assessment results is used to inform future planning within the organisation.	50	9.2	15	7.6	35	10.1
Total responses	543	100	198	100	345	100

Table 42: FE Views on initial assessment, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. There are no initial assessment services available to identify or support students with disabilities.	10	2.3	4	3.8	2	16.7
b. Initial assessment is limited and ad hoc.	69	16.2	15	14.4	1	8.3
c. There is a coordinated approach across the organisation to the initial assessment of students.	157	36.8	41	39.4	4	33.3
d. There is a purposeful and systematic use of initial assessment results across the organisation.	74	17.3	16	15.4	2	16.7
e. Specialist support is available to enable the effective use of initial assessment results across the curriculum.	77	18.0	19	18.3	2	16.7
f. An overall evaluation of initial assessment results is used to inform future planning within the organisation.	40	9.4	9	8.7	1	8.3
Total responses	427	100	104	100	12	100

Table 43: FE Views on funding regimes, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Little priority is given to securing funds for the support of students with disabilities.	24	5.6	8	4.6	16	6.3
b. Funding is mainly via special project funds.	67	15.6	29	16.8	38	14.8
c. There is coordinated funding of support services for students with disabilities.	131	30.5	53	30.6	78	30.5
d. There is a designated budget for the funding of staff development opportunities.	79	18.4	30	17.3	49	19.1
e. There is a centrally funded specialist support unit, which coordinates support services across the organisation.	85	19.8	33	19.1	52	20.3
f. There is a planned deployment of resources across the organisation based on needs analysis.	43	10.0	20	11.6	23	9.0
Total responses	429	100	173	100	256	100

Table 44: FE Views on funding regimes, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Little priority is given to securing funds for the support of students with disabilities.	19	5.5	3	4.0	2	22.2
b. Funding is mainly via special project funds.	54	15.7	11	14.7	2	22.2
c. There is coordinated funding of support services for students with disabilities.	103	29.9	25	33.3	3	33.3
d. There is a designated budget for the funding of staff development opportunities.	67	19.4	10	13.3	2	22.2
e. There is a centrally funded specialist support unit, which coordinates support services across the organisation.	66	19.1	19	25.3	0	0.0
f. There is a planned deployment of resources across the organisation based on needs analysis.	36	10.4	7	9.3	0	0.0
Total responses	345	100	75	100	9	100

Table 45: FE Views on record keeping, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. There is no systematic record keeping in relation to students with disabilities.	19	3.6	5	2.8	14	4.1
b. Record keeping is ad hoc, and dependent upon the interest of staff.	75	14.4	26	14.4	49	14.4
c. There is a common and coordinated approach to record keeping across the organisation.	154	29.6	59	32.6	95	27.9
d. Records kept up to date and relevant.	155	29.8	50	27.6	105	30.9
e. Data entry and retrieval is available to all relevant staff on an appropriate basis.	69	13.2	24	13.3	45	13.2
f. Evaluation of records is part of the evidence base used in future planning across the organisation.	49	9.4	17	9.4	32	9.4
Total responses	521	100	181	100	340	100

Table 46: FE Views on record keeping, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. There is no systematic record keeping in relation to students with disabilities.	12	2.9	6	5.8	1	14.3
b. Record keeping is ad hoc, and dependent upon the interest of staff.	67	16.3	7	6.7	1	14.3
c. There is a common and coordinated approach to record keeping across the organisation.	122	29.8	31	29.8	1	14.3
d. Records are kept up to date and relevant.	121	29.5	32	30.8	2	28.6
e. Data entry and retrieval is available to all relevant staff on an appropriate basis.	50	12.2	18	17.3	1	14.3
f. Evaluation of records is part of the evidence base used in future planning across the organisation.	38	9.3	10	9.6	1	14.3
Total responses	410	100	104	100	7	100

Table 47: FE Views on barriers, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Funding	79	7.8	32	9.0	47	7.2
b. Lack of confidence	182	18.0	70	19.7	112	17.1
c. Lack of qualifications	44	4.4	15	4.2	29	4.4
d. Weaknesses in the referral system	65	6.4	23	6.5	42	6.4
e. Lack of awareness of general support available	213	21.1	74	20.8	139	21.2
f. Lack of awareness of curriculum support facilities available	146	14.5	53	14.9	93	14.2
g. Absence of appropriate car parking facilities	41	4.1	11	3.1	30	4.6
h. Absence of ramps/lifts/appropriate toilet facilities	33	3.3	11	3.1	22	3.4
i. Absence of appropriate signage for students with a visual impairment	56	5.5	17	4.8	39	6.0
j. Lack of provision of documentation in a variety of formats	80	7.9	24	6.8	56	8.5
k. Other	19	1.9	5	1.4	14	2.1
l. Don't know	52	5.1	20	5.6	32	4.9
Total responses	1010	100	355	100	655	100

Table 48: FE Views on improvements, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Clear and comprehensive funding mechanisms	42	4.5	15	4.4	27	4.5
b. Wide ranging and seamless referral systems	34	3.6	11	3.2	23	3.8
c. Marketing activities which outline the support and facilities available to students with a disability and/or learning difficulty.	109	11.6	36	10.6	73	12.1
d. Appropriate car-parking facilities	222	23.5	80	23.5	142	23.6
e. Provision of ramps, lifts and appropriate toilet facilities	296	31.4	110	32.3	186	30.9
f. Provision of appropriate of signage to facilitate students with a visual impairment	164	17.4	64	18.8	100	16.6
g. Provision of documentation in a variety of formats	29	3.1	10	2.9	19	3.2
h. Other	18	1.9	6	1.8	12	2.0
i. None	29	3.1	9	2.6	20	3.3
Total responses	943	100	341	100	602	100

HE TABLES

Table 49: HE Staff contact with students with disabilities, by gender

Contact	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	23	41.1	25	71.4	48	52.8
No	31	55.4	7	20.0	38	41.8
No response	2	3.6	3	8.6	5	5.5
Totals	56	100	35	100	91	100

Table 50: HE Training in relation to students with disabilities, by gender

Contact	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	13	23.2	20	57.1	33	36.3
No	41	73.2	15	42.9	56	61.5
No response	2	3.6			2	2.2
Totals	56	100	35	100	91	100

Table 51: HE Mean scores, by gender

Statement	All responses			Male			Female		
	Count	Mean	Std Dev	Count	Mean	Std Dev	Count	Mean	Std Dev
1. Fully aware of policies and procedures.	91	7.48	2.29	56	6.91	2.20	35	8.40	2.16
2. Always briefed in advance of work with a student.	89	7.90	2.65	54	7.67	2.67	35	8.26	2.63
3. Fully aware of initial assessment procedures.	91	6.02	3.32	56	5.43	3.22	35	6.97	3.29
4. Appropriate facilities and equipment.	90	7.26	2.32	56	6.82	2.51	34	7.97	1.77
5. Appropriate professional support from experts.	91	6.69	2.98	56	6.21	2.81	35	7.46	3.14
6. Left to me to decide how best to work with student.	90	3.13	3.15	56	3.30	2.79	34	2.85	3.69
7. Not appropriate to change our way of working.	91	1.60	2.73	56	1.61	2.53	35	1.60	3.07
8. More should be done to support students.	91	5.51	2.94	56	5.50	2.89	35	5.51	3.06
9. I've been involved in a successful support approach.	86	4.42	3.95	54	3.91	3.65	32	5.28	4.33

Table 52: HE Views on how organisation deals with students, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Nothing seems planned or coordinated when dealing with students with disabilities.	2	1.1	2	1.9	0	0.0
b. Responsibility for students with disabilities is delegated to appropriate staff.	53	28.2	30	28.3	23	28.0
c. There is a coordinated approach to dealing with students with disabilities.	56	29.8	31	29.2	25	30.5
d. Management regularly review the staff needed to support students.	11	5.9	6	5.7	5	6.1
e. Management ensure good practice is adopted throughout the organisation.	32	17.0	18	17.0	14	17.1
f. My organisation gives a high priority in its future planning to the needs of students with disabilities.	34	18.1	19	17.9	15	18.3
Total responses	188	100	106	100	82	100

Table 53: HE Views on how organisation deals with students, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Nothing seems planned or coordinated when dealing with students with disabilities.	2	1.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
b. Responsibility for students with disabilities is delegated to appropriate staff.	41	28.9	11	25.0	1	50.0
c. There is a coordinated approach to dealing with students with disabilities.	41	28.9	15	34.1	0	0.0
d. Management regularly review the staff needed to support students.	8	5.6	3	6.8	0	0.0
e. Management ensure good practice is adopted throughout the organisation.	24	16.9	7	15.9	1	50.0
f. My organisation gives a high priority in its future planning to the needs of students with disabilities.	26	18.3	8	18.2	0	0.0
Total responses	142	100	44	100	2	100

Table 54: HE Views on management approach, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. I am not aware of my line management giving any priority to disability issues.	5	2.9	5	5.2	0	0.0
b. Disability support is managed in isolation from everything else.	11	6.4	9	9.4	2	2.7
c. There is a well managed central support service for students with disabilities.	64	37.4	37	38.5	27	36.0
d. Management keep me informed of good practice in supporting students with disabilities.	30	17.5	16	16.7	14	18.7
e. Disability support services provide good support and advice to everyone in my area of work in relation to dealing with students with disabilities.	38	22.2	17	17.7	21	28.0
f. Staff with expertise in disability contribute to future planning in our department.	23	13.5	12	12.5	11	14.7
Total responses	171	100	96	100	75	100

Table 55: HE Views on management approach, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. I am not aware of my line management giving any priority to disability issues.	5	3.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
b. Disability support is managed in isolation from everything else.	8	6.3	3	7.3	0	0.0
c. There is a well managed central support service for students with disabilities.	48	37.5	15	36.6	1	50.0
d. Management keep me informed of good practice in supporting students with disabilities.	23	18.0	7	17.1	0	0.0
e. Disability support services provide good support and advice to everyone in my area of work in relation to dealing with students with disabilities.	30	23.4	7	17.1	1	50.0
f. Staff with expertise in disability contribute to future planning in our department.	14	10.9	9	22.0	0	0.0
Total responses	128	100	41	100	2	100

Table 56: HE Views on access and support, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. The buildings and facilities in my place of work are entirely unsuitable for students with disabilities.	6	3.8	5	5.5	1	1.5
b. Some parts of our buildings are accessible to those with physical disabilities, and there is some specialist assistance such as signage in Braille.	38	23.9	21	23.1	17	25.0
c. Access and related issues are well co-ordinated throughout my organisation.	39	24.5	28	30.8	11	16.2
d. Accessibility issues are part of our planning, including for one off events.	41	25.8	18	19.8	23	33.8
e. Multi-format material is available to support all events and courses.	17	10.7	9	9.9	8	11.8
f. All aspects of access to education are included in forward planning.	18	11.3	10	11.0	8	11.8
Total responses	159	100	91	100	68	100

Table 57: HE Views on access and support, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. The buildings and facilities in my place of work are entirely unsuitable for students with disabilities.	5	4.4	1	2.3	0	0.0
b. Some parts of our buildings are accessible to those with physical disabilities, and there is some specialist assistance such as signage in Braille.	30	26.3	7	16.3	1	50.0
c. Access and related issues are well co-ordinated throughout my organisation.	29	25.4	9	20.9	1	50.0
d. Accessibility issues are part of our planning, including for one off events.	29	25.4	12	27.9	0	0.0
e. Multi-format material is available to support all events and courses.	11	9.6	6	14.0	0	0.0
f. All aspects of access to education are included in forward planning	10	8.8	8	18.6	0	0.0
Total responses	114	100	43	100	2	100

Table 58: HE Views on wider organisation support, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Support staff, such as canteen and janitorial staff, are not equipped to assist students with disabilities.	9	6.2	5	6.2	4	6.3
b. Support staff are expected to help, but it is left to them to decide how best to provide assistance.	20	13.8	14	17.3	6	9.4
c. There is a central support, including staff development, to enable support staff to meet the needs of students with disabilities.	38	26.2	22	27.2	16	25.0
d. Support departments plan and develop provision of students with disabilities.	34	23.4	21	25.9	13	20.3
e. There is a systematic sharing of good practice amongst all support departments.	18	12.4	9	11.1	9	14.1
f. The organisation includes support departments in the forward planning of disability policies.	26	17.9	10	12.3	16	25.0
Total responses	145	100	81	100	64	100

Table 59: HE Views on wider organisation support, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Support staff, such as canteen and janitorial staff, are not equipped to assist students with disabilities.	7	6.8	2	4.9	0	0.0
b. Support staff are expected to help, but it is left to them to decide how best to provide assistance.	13	12.6	6	14.6	1	100.0
c. There is a central support, including staff development, to enable support staff to meet the needs of students with disabilities.	31	30.1	7	17.1	0	0.0
d. Support departments plan and develop provision of students with disabilities.	27	26.2	7	17.1	0	0.0
e. There is a systematic sharing of good practice amongst all support departments.	11	10.7	7	17.1	0	0.0
f. The organisation includes support departments in the forward planning of disability policies.	14	13.6	12	29.3	0	0.0
Total responses	103	100	41	100	1	100

Table 60: HE Views on examination and assessment support, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. There is no special examination or assessment support for students with disabilities.	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
b. Special examination and assessment arrangements are dealt with in an ad hoc, on request basis.	12	7.7	9	9.9	3	4.6
c. There is a centralized system for the co-ordination of special examination and assessment arrangements.	55	35.3	34	37.4	21	32.3
d. Special examination and assessment needs are identified and communicated at the outset of the student's course.	45	28.8	25	27.5	20	30.8
e. Course teams plan for multiple examination and assessment methods.	16	10.3	9	9.9	7	10.8
f. Differentiation of examination and assessment arrangements has become part of standard practice.	28	17.9	14	15.4	14	21.5
Total responses	156	100	91	100	65	100

Table 61: HE Views on examination and assessment support, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. There is no special examination or assessment support for students with disabilities.	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
b. Special examination and assessment arrangements are dealt with in an ad hoc, on request basis.	11	9.3	1	2.8	0	0.0
c. There is a centralized system for the co-ordination of special examination and assessment arrangements.	44	37.3	10	27.8	1	50.0
d. Special examination and assessment needs are identified and communicated at the outset of the student's course.	34	28.8	10	27.8	1	50.0
e. Course teams plan for multiple examination and assessment methods.	11	9.3	5	13.9	0	0.0
f. Differentiation of examination and assessment arrangements has become part of standard practice.	18	15.3	10	27.8	0	0.0
Total responses	118	100	36	100	2	100

Table 62: HE Views on teaching and learning, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Teaching and learning practice is not affected by the presence of students with disabilities.	10	7.6	8	10.5	2	3.6
b. Changes in teaching and learning are entirely left to individual teaching staff.	22	16.8	16	21.1	6	10.9
c. There is a coordinated approach in our department to supporting the teaching and learning needs of students with disabilities.	43	32.8	23	30.3	20	36.4
d. The needs of students with disabilities are integrated across the entire curriculum.	19	14.5	12	15.8	7	12.7
e. Learning and teaching resources are available in a variety of formats to support a range of needs and learning styles.	33	25.2	16	21.1	17	30.9
f. Support tools are integrated across the curriculum, and staff are trained in the use of ILT and enabling technologies.	4	3.1	1	1.3	3	5.5
Total responses	131	100	76	100	55	100

Table 63: HE Views on teaching and learning, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Teaching and learning practice is not affected by the presence of students with disabilities.	9	8.8	1	3.7	0	0.0
b. Changes in teaching and learning are entirely left to individual teaching staff.	18	17.6	3	11.1	1	50.0
c. There is a coordinated approach in our department to supporting the teaching and learning needs of students with disabilities.	32	31.4	10	37.0	1	50.0
d. The needs of students with disabilities are integrated across the entire curriculum.	13	12.7	6	22.2	0	0.0
e. Learning and teaching resources are available in a variety of formats to support a range of needs and learning styles.	27	26.5	6	22.2	0	0.0
f. Support tools are integrated across the curriculum, and staff are trained in the use of ILT and enabling technologies.	3	2.9	1	3.7	0	0.0
Total responses	102	100	27	100	2	100

Table 64: HE Views on staff development, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. I am not aware of any staff development programmes relating to supporting students with disabilities.	12	9.8	9	12.2	3	6.1
b. Some training is available, but it is not a high priority.	26	21.1	19	25.7	7	14.3
c. There is a coordinated approach to the provision of staff training in disability issues.	28	22.8	14	18.9	14	28.6
d. Staff training for all staff is available from expert trainers.	35	28.5	16	21.6	19	38.8
e. There is a coordinated approach to the identification of staff training needs.	16	13.0	12	16.2	4	8.2
f. Accredited training is available, and training plans are systematically developed for staff.	6	4.9	4	5.4	2	4.1
Total responses	123	100	74	100	49	100

Table 65: HE Views on staff development, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. I am not aware of any staff development programmes relating to supporting students with disabilities.	10	10.6	2	7.4	0	0.0
b. Some training is available, but it is not a high priority.	20	21.3	5	18.5	1	50.0
c. There is a coordinated approach to the provision of staff training in disability issues.	17	18.1	10	37.0	1	50.0
d. Staff training for all staff is available from expert trainers.	29	30.9	6	22.2	0	0.0
e. There is a coordinated approach to the identification of staff training needs.	13	13.8	3	11.1	0	0.0
f. Accredited training is available, and training plans are systematically developed for staff.	5	5.3	1	3.7	0	0.0
Total responses	94	100	27	100	2	100

Table 66: HE Views on initial assessment, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. There are no initial assessment services available to identify or support students with disabilities.	2	1.5	2	2.7	0	0.0
b. Initial assessment is limited and ad hoc.	10	7.5	10	13.5	0	0.0
c. There is a coordinated approach across the organisation to the initial assessment of students.	57	42.5	32	43.2	25	41.7
d. There is a purposeful and systematic use of initial assessment results across the organisation.	29	21.6	13	17.6	16	26.7
e. Specialist support is available to enable the effective use of initial assessment results across the curriculum.	25	18.7	12	16.2	13	21.7
f. An overall evaluation of initial assessment results is used to inform future planning within the organisation.	11	8.2	5	6.8	6	10.0
Total responses	134	100	74	100	60	100

Table 67: HE Views on initial assessment, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. There are no initial assessment services available to identify or support students with disabilities.	2	2.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
b. Initial assessment is limited and ad hoc.	9	9.0	0	0.0	1	50.0
c. There is a coordinated approach across the organisation to the initial assessment of students.	44	44.0	12	37.5	1	50.0
d. There is a purposeful and systematic use of initial assessment results across the organisation.	20	20.0	9	28.1	0	0.0
e. Specialist support is available to enable the effective use of initial assessment results across the curriculum.	18	18.0	7	21.9	0	0.0
f. An overall evaluation of initial assessment results is used to inform future planning within the organisation.	7	7.0	4	12.5	0	0.0
Total responses	100	100	32	100	2	100

Table 68: HE Views on funding regimes, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Little priority is given to securing funds for the support of students with disabilities.	6	5.9	4	6.8	2	4.8
b. Funding is mainly via special project funds.	12	11.9	9	15.3	3	7.1
c. There is coordinated funding of support services for students with disabilities.	34	33.7	21	35.6	13	31.0
d. There is a designated budget for the funding of staff development opportunities.	17	16.8	8	13.6	9	21.4
e. There is a centrally funded specialist support unit, which coordinates support services across the organisation.	24	23.8	13	22.0	11	26.2
f. There is a planned deployment of resources across the organisation based on needs analysis.	8	7.9	4	6.8	4	9.5
Total responses	101	100	59	100	42	100

Table 69: HE Views on funding regimes, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Little priority is given to securing funds for the support of students with disabilities.	5	6.6	1	4.2	0	0.0
b. Funding is mainly via special project funds.	8	10.5	3	12.5	1	100.0
c. There is coordinated funding of support services for students with disabilities.	28	36.8	6	25.0	0	0.0
d. There is a designated budget for the funding of staff development opportunities.	12	15.8	5	20.8	0	0.0
e. There is a centrally funded specialist support unit, which coordinates support services across the organisation.	17	22.4	7	29.2	0	0.0
f. There is a planned deployment of resources across the organisation based on needs analysis.	6	7.9	2	8.3	0	0.0
Total responses	76	100	24	100	1	100

Table 70: HE Views on record keeping, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. There is no systematic record keeping in relation to students with disabilities.	4	2.7	2	2.5	2	3.0
b. Record keeping is ad hoc, and dependent upon the interest of staff.	14	9.6	13	16.3	1	1.5
c. There is a common and coordinated approach to record keeping across the organisation.	44	30.1	25	31.3	19	28.8
d. Records are kept up to date and relevant.	38	26.0	18	22.5	20	30.3
e. Data entry and retrieval is available to all relevant staff on an appropriate basis.	32	21.9	17	21.3	15	22.7
f. Evaluation of records is part of the evidence base used in future planning across the organisation.	14	9.6	5	6.3	9	13.6
Total responses	146	100	80	100	66	100

Table 71: HE Views on record keeping, by job category

View	Academic		Support/Admin		Not known	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. There is no systematic record keeping in relation to students with disabilities.	2	1.9	2	4.9	0	0.0
b. Record keeping is ad hoc, and dependent upon the interest of staff.	10	9.7	3	7.3	1	50.0
c. There is a common and coordinated approach to record keeping across the organisation.	36	35.0	8	19.5	0	0.0
d. Records are kept up to date and relevant.	25	24.3	12	29.3	1	50.0
e. Data entry and retrieval is available to all relevant staff on an appropriate basis.	22	21.4	10	24.4	0	0.0
f. Evaluation of records is part of the evidence base used in future planning across the organisation.	8	7.8	6	14.6	0	0.0
Total responses	103	100	41	100	2	100

Table 72: HE Views on barriers, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Funding	29	12.8	15	10.9	14	15.7
b. Lack of confidence	48	21.2	30	21.9	18	20.2
c. Lack of qualifications	22	9.7	15	10.9	7	7.9
d. Weaknesses in the referral system	5	2.2	5	3.6	0	0.0
e. Lack of awareness of general support available	47	20.8	25	18.2	22	24.7
f. Lack of awareness of curriculum support facilities available	26	11.5	13	9.5	13	14.6
g. Absence of appropriate car parking facilities	8	3.5	4	2.9	4	4.5
h. Absence of ramps/lifts/appropriate toilet facilities	7	3.1	7	5.1	0	0.0
i. Absence of appropriate signage for students with a visual impairment	10	4.4	4	2.9	6	6.7
j. Lack of provision of documentation in a variety of formats	9	4.0	7	5.1	2	2.2
k. Other	4	1.8	3	2.2	1	1.1
l. Don't know	11	4.9	9	6.6	2	2.2
Total responses	226	100	137	100	89	100

Table 73: HE Views on improvements, by gender

View	All		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a. Clear and comprehensive funding mechanisms	14	7.5	7	6.1	7	9.7
b. Wide ranging and seamless referral systems	16	8.6	10	8.7	6	8.3
c. Marketing activities which outline the support and facilities available to students with a disability and/or learning difficulty.	17	9.1	8	7.0	9	12.5
d. Appropriate car-parking facilities	30	16.0	21	18.3	9	12.5
e. Provision of ramps, lifts and appropriate toilet facilities	74	39.6	45	39.1	29	40.3
f. Provision of appropriate of signage to facilitate students with a visual impairment	11	5.9	9	7.8	2	2.8
g. Provision of documentation in a variety of formats	18	9.6	9	7.8	9	12.5
h. Other	1	0.5	1	0.9	0	0.0
l. None	6	3.2	5	4.3	1	1.4
Total responses	187	100	115	100	72	100

