

Mrs Cathie White
Clerk to the Committee
Committee for Employment and Learning
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Our Ref: COR/410/411/13

| October 2013

Dear Cathie

At their meeting on 11 September 2013 Members of the Committee for Employment and Learning requested information regarding student support arrangements within further education (FE), for those with disabilities and/or learning difficulties; and data on participation rates, by constituency. In addition, the Committee has also requested information on the findings of the audit of provision for students with a learning difficulty or disability, aged 19 years and over.

Support Arrangements for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

The Department for Employment and Learning provides ring-fenced financial assistance through the Additional Support Fund (ASF), for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. This funding enables FE colleges to provide technical and personal support for these students. Technical support includes specialised enabling equipment, such as brailers, Reading Edge equipment, IT adaptations, specialist software and related licences and IT hardware, hearing loops and conference folders. Personal support includes specialist tutors/advisers, such as hearing or visual impairment tutors, speech therapists, IT advisers, interpreters (for students with a hearing impairment), support workers/classroom assistants and note-takers. The Department has recently increased this fund from £1.5 million to £2 million per annum.

In addition, FE colleges receive £2m per annum, through the ASF to help meet the cost of providing tailored discrete courses for SLDD for whom mainstream courses are not appropriate due to the nature/degree of their disability/learning difficulty. The £2m per annum is provided to FE colleges to meet the costs of reduced class sizes, additional lecturer contact time, classroom assistants or other services involved in delivering tailored courses for those students.

I regret that data on participation rates in FE by constituency is not available, as the data is not gathered or recorded on this basis. However, data on participation rates for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, categorised by college for the 2011/12 academic year, is available and is attached at **Annex A**. Data relating to those participating in the 2012/13 academic year will not be available until December 2013 / January 2014, in line with all other FE statistical data.

I have also attached, at **Annex B**, the findings of the audit carried out across the FE sector, of provision for students aged 19 and over, with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, for the period 2012/13.

I trust you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely

FIONA STANLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

**PARTICIPATION RATES FOR STUDENTS AGED 19 AND OVER WITH
DISABILITIES AND OR/LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, UNDERTAKING DISCRETE
PROVISION**

2011/12 Academic Year

FE College	No. of Students
Belfast Metropolitan	351
Northern Regional	167
South Eastern Regional	108
Southern Regional	274
South West Regional	158
North West Regional	205
Total	1,263

Source: FESR

³SLDD - Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Age is at 01st July 2011

Guide to table: The table provides details of the number of enrolments, by college, in discrete, standalone provision, for students with a learning difficulty and/or disability. All enrolments receive support from the Additional Support Fund.

AUDIT OF FE SECTOR PROVISION FOR THOSE WITH DISABILITIES - 2012/13**Special Needs Provision in the FE sector**

All six colleges were asked to provide details of provision offered in the 2012/13 academic year, for students who, as a result of their particular learning difficulty/disability, are unable to participate in mainstream college provision. This is termed 'discrete' provision and is supported by the Department through the Additional Support Fund (ASF). This funding allows colleges to provide additional lecturers or classroom assistants to facilitate smaller class sizes, thus creating a more suitable learning environment for students who require higher levels of support. This provision is delivered in either a main college campus or in a college outreach centre.

Audit Findings

The table attached at **Annex C**, contains information on FE provision for students with moderate to severe learning difficulties, by college and campus location, for courses delivered in 2012/13 (students undertaking these courses were supported by the Department's Additional Support Fund). It should be noted that the term "courses" may refer to provision ranging from full-time up to 30 hours per week duration to part-time of one to two hours per week in duration.

Summary**South Eastern Regional College (SERC)**

The college provided information in relation to their discrete provision across all campuses. The results provided indicate that a total of 12 courses were in place across four campuses; 2 in Newtownards, 1 in Bangor, 5 in Downpatrick and 4

Lisburn). Course levels ranged from Entry Level to Level 2.

North West Regional College (NWRC)

The college had in place a total of 40 courses across three campuses; 4 in Limavady, 13 in Strabane and 15 at the Strand Road campus. A further 8 courses were delivered off campus. Course levels ranged from non-accredited Level to Level 2.

Northern Regional College (NRC)

The college had in place a total of 23 courses across six campuses; 2 in Antrim, 5 in Ballymena, 2 in Coleraine, 2 in Larne, 6 in Magherafelt and 6 in Newtownabbey. Course levels ranged from provision at non-accredited Level to Level 2 courses.

Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC)

The college had in place a total of 45 courses across six campuses; 4 in Castlereagh, 4 in Chichester Avenue, 21 in Millfield, 6 in Riddell, 1 in Tower Street and 2 in Whiterock. A further 7 courses were delivered off campus. Course levels ranged from Entry Level to Level 2.

Southern Regional College (SRC)

The college had in place a total of a total of 35 courses across six campuses; 10 in Armagh, 6 in Banbridge, 6 in Lurgan, 1 in Kilkeel, 2 in Newry and 3 in Portadown. A further 7 courses were delivered off campus. Course levels ranged from provision at non-accredited level to level 2 courses.

South West College (SWC)

The college had in place a total of 61 courses across three campuses; 6 in Cookstown, 6 in Enniskillen and 49 in Omagh. Course levels ranged from provision at non-accredited level to level 2 courses.

ANNEX C

FE COURSE PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH MODERATE TO SEVERE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, BY COLLEGE AND CAMPSUS LOCATION

Guide to tables: The tables below provide a break down, by campus level, of the number of discrete, standalone courses available for students with a learning difficulty and/or disability and the qualification level. Students undertaking these courses are supported by the Additional Support Fund.

South Eastern Regional College (SERC)

	Courses by qualification level				
Campus	Non-accredited	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Total
Downpatrick	0	4	1	0	5
Lisburn	0	3	1	0	4
Ards	0	1	1	0	2
Bangor	0	1	0	0	1
Total	0	9	3	0	12

North West Regional College (NWRC)

	Courses by qualification level				
Campus	Non-accredited	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Total
Strand Road	3	5	7	0	15
Limavady	0	2	2	0	4
Strabane	9	2	2	0	13
Off campus	8	0	0	0	8
Total	20	9	11	0	40

Northern Regional College (NRC)

	Courses by qualification level				
Campus	Non-accredited	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Total
Antrim	0	2	0	0	2
Ballymena	1	4	0	0	5
Coleraine	0	0	2	0	2
Larne	1	0	0	1	2
Magherafelt	4	2	0	0	6
Newtownabbey	6	0	0	0	6
Total	12	8	2	1	23

Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC)

	Courses by qualification level				
Campus	Non-accredited	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Total
Millfield	0	16	5	0	21
Tower Street	0	0	1	0	1
Whiterock	0	2	0	0	2
Riddell	0	6	0	0	6
Castlereagh	0	4	0	0	4
Chichester Avenue	0	4	0	0	4
Off campus	0	7	0	0	7
Total	0	39	6	0	45

Southern Regional College (SRC)

	Courses by qualification level				
Campus	Non-accredited	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Total
Armagh	6	3	1	0	10
Banbridge	2	1	3	0	6
Lurgan	2	1	3	0	6
Kilkeel	0	1	0	0	1
Newry	1	1	0	0	2
Portadown	1	1	1	0	3
Off campus	4	1	0	2	7
Total	16	9	8	2	35

South Western College (SWC)

	Courses by qualification level				
Campus	Non-accredited	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Total
Cookstown	3	0	3	0	6
Enniskillen	0	2	4	0	6
Omagh	0	47	2	0	49
Total	3	49	9	0	61

DAY CENTRE PROVISION, DELIVERED BY FE COLLEGES FOR ADULTS WITH MODERATE TO SEVERE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Guide to table: The table below provides a break down, by college, of the provision, delivered by FE colleges to adults with moderate to severe learning difficulties, in day centres. Whilst it is recognised that this type of provision adds quality to the lives of these individuals and enhances their experiences, such courses are generally recreational and non-progressing. Individuals undertaking these courses do not receive support from the Additional Support Fund.

	Numbers of available courses and qualification level				
College	Non-accredited	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	College totals
SERC	0	1	5	0	6
NWRC	61	5	0	2	68
NRC	42	0	0	0	42
BMC	36	0	0	0	36
SRC	14	4	1	2	21
SWC	111	0	5	1	117