Written response to the recommendations from Clydebank College

I refer to your letter of 13 September 2007 in which you ask for information on progress with the recommendations in the “Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities” report and information on our organisation’s general view of the report.

For ease of reference, I attach a paper which reproduces the relevant Committee recommendations along with our comments.

Yours sincerely

Matt Mochar
Principal/Chief Executive
Clydebank College
26 November 2007
Clydebank College

Implementation of Scottish Parliament’s Equal Opportunities Report – “Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities”

Recommendation 2: Adopting the Social Model of Disability

In line with the social model of disability, the College recognises that negative attitudes and prejudices have a disabling effect on people as opposed to any impairments which a person may have. The College’s recruitment policy focuses on a disabled person’s abilities and asks what support they will need, if any, so that they can experience employment at the College without barriers. The College also holds mandatory training for all staff where the social model of disability is explained, and misconceptions or prejudices about disabled people are examined.

Recommendation 7: Promotion of Equalities for all Staff in Job Descriptions

The College is in consultation with staff in respect of amending job descriptions to include the promotion of equality as a requirement of all College roles.

Recommendation 18: Using the Disability Equality Duty to Deliver Exemplar Practices

As a result of the disability equality duty, the College developed its Disability Equality Scheme in December 2006. The development of this scheme relied heavily on the guidance and Code of Practice available from the then DRC, which contained information regarding exemplar practices. The College is using its Scheme as a means of delivering exemplar practices, and monitors best practice by receiving updates and working in partnership with specialist disability organisations such as Capability Scotland.

Recommendation 20: Going beyond the Statutory Requirements in Recruitment

The College has been awarded the “Two Ticks: Positive About Disabled People” symbol because of its recruitment policy which goes beyond the statutory requirements in that it guarantees an interview for all applicants with a disability.

Recommendation 39: Seeking Stakeholder Feedback

Working groups for staff and students with a disability meet regularly to discuss support measures and how these can be improved if necessary. Feedback from stakeholders has been particularly helpful in the area of Estates and Facilities, where changes have been made as a direct result of feedback received. The College also asks external specialist organisations to provide feedback. In particular, the College is currently considering feedback
received from West Dunbartonshire Council’s Sensory Impairment Team regarding the design aspects of the college environment.

Recommendation 41: Using the SFC Toolkit

The College’s Equality and Diversity Advisor is familiar with this toolkit and has used information contained within in awareness training sessions. The College will use the self assessment audit tool in 2008, and will report the results of this audit.

Recommendation 55: Removing Barriers to Disclosure

The College’s marketing materials have been designed to encourage disclosure of disability as they clearly state the College’s intention to support all students in achieving their potential. The application form asks students to disclose details of any disability so that together, staff and prospective students can consider if any adjustments are necessary. The College’s dedicated support unit for students with a disability, namely the Study Base team, visit classes at the beginning of each term to encourage students to disclose any disabilities so that they can receive support if necessary. The College welcomes the Committee’s recommendations that FE providers should share techniques which will support a person’s choice to disclose, and respectfully suggests that Equality Forward could collate and disseminate such techniques.

Recommendations 64 and 65: “Pretendy” and Vocational Courses

The College acknowledges the perception identified by the Committee that colleges can sometimes be seen as a kind of day care arrangement for students with a disability. However, the College would ask the Committee to note that life courses are not necessarily “pretendy”. The students who attend such courses at the College’s Supported Learning Unit do so with encouragement by staff to gain the skills necessary to gain employment or progress to other courses. With regard to increasing vocational courses for students with a disability, the College is currently looking at this as part of its Disability Action Plan. In particular, the College is aiming to increase places on IT and Construction courses for students with a disability.

Recommendation 94: Disability Equality Training

Over the past year, the College has held mandatory Equality and Diversity training sessions for all members of staff. This training has included elements of disability awareness, and was developed using materials available from specialist disability organisations. The College notes the Committee’s recommendation that all high level disability training programmes should be delivered by disabled people with appropriate training skills, experience and/or qualifications; however, it is not always possible to appoint such a person to deliver such a considerable number of awareness sessions, as there is currently no quality assurance framework for training providers.
Recommendation 101: Inclusion of Equalities Issues in the Curriculum

In 2008, all teaching staff at the College will attend a continuing professional development training course in implementing QELTM (Quality and Equality in Teaching Materials). This course will include specific guidance for disability equality.

Recommendations 126 and 127: Accessible Parking Spaces

The College notes the Committee’s recommendations that the Scottish Executive and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities develop mechanisms for the effective enforcement of proper use of accessible parking for disabled people. The College is aware that English local authorities work in conjunction with private car park owners to enforce proper use of disabled spaces and wonders if this would be feasible in Scotland.

Recommendations 151 and 152: Compliance Action by the Disability Rights Commission

Achieving equality for disabled people is a priority, and action should be taken against those who fail to comply with legislation. However, the CEHR, which now encompasses the previous DRC, should not just be an enforcing body; it should also enable and support public bodies in meeting the equality duties. Non compliance is not always a result of negligence or questionable intentions. It can sometimes arise as a result of failing to understand the more technical aspects of the disability legislation. In this event it is suggested that the CEHR should investigate and support public bodies in resolving compliance issues before publicising widely as recommended in the Report.