Written response to the recommendations from Edinburgh’s Telford College

Equal Opportunities Committee 2nd Report 2006 ‘Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities’ Formal Response from the Scottish Executive

Legislative and Policy Context

**Recommendation 3:** The Committee recommends that all public authorities should work to the social model of disability when implementing their duties under the forthcoming Disability Equality Duty.

**Response:** The Executive will do this and we will also encourage other public authorities to do so.

**Edinburgh’s Telford College Response**
The College works to the social model of disability when implementing our duty under the Disability Equality Duty.

**Recommendation 7:** The Committee recommends that all public sector staff, especially in light of the forthcoming Disability Equality Duty, have the promotion of equalities as part of their job descriptions and performance competencies.

**Response:** The Executive’s Diversity Strategy, *Positive about You*, was launched in November 2000 and re-launched in December 2005. The Strategy placed a renewed emphasis on the role of each member of staff in progressing the diversity agenda: encouraging appropriate training and taking personal responsibility for diversity and equality issues.

The Executive’s Departmental Diversity Delivery Plan was published in July 2006.

It supports the wider Cabinet Office diversity initiative – “Delivering a diverse Civil Service – a 10 Point Plan”. The Delivery Plan also places a renewed focus on the individual in relation to the Executive’s diversity agenda. Key action points include a review of the Executive’s pay and performance management systems to embed diversity and equality and the introduction of individual staff performance appraisal objectives that are in line with Departmental business plans.

**Performance Management**
Diversity is already embedded in the current Competency Framework and in the management and behavioural objectives of the Performance Management System.

Our guidance includes a specific section on managing disability in the Performance Management process.
This includes advice on disability awareness, the role of the line manager, agreeing objectives, training and development, career aspirations and reasonable adjustments.

We also aim to ensure that all staff objectives take account of the mainstreaming diversity agenda and are aligned to Departmental business plans.

This will mean that, as part of the Executive’s current review of its performance management system, all Scottish Executive staff below Senior Civil Service level will have an annual mandatory objective relating to diversity issues. (SCS staff already have a corporate diversity objective).

The Executive’s Diversity Delivery Plan also includes an action point on the review of performance appraisal markings in relation to equality strands.

The public sector more broadly
Diversity and equality are matters for each individual part of the public sector. However, the Executive is considering ways in which Scottish public sector organisations can work more closely together, including the possibility of a public sector Diversity Network.

Edinburgh’s Telford College Response
The College will develop and improve College policies, procedures and processes and will promote equalities throughout these. All existing and new staff in the College are required to undertake training and sit a test on all the Equalities.

Access to Work

Fresh Talent

Recommendation 12: In order to ensure appropriate support to disabled people, the Committee recommends that —

- disabled people are given support into employment for a time period that is appropriately flexible to cater for their individual circumstances based on an assessment of the support they require; and

- more should be done to help disabled people sustain employment if their circumstances change.

Response: Lead responsibility for disability employment programmes rests with the UK Government. We will consider this recommendation further with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Supporting people into employment and then continuing that support whilst in work is recognised in Workforce Plus as a key component in helping people to sustain and then progress in employment. We have not set a time limit for
post employment support. People will need different levels of support depending on their individual circumstances.

We launched a strategy document “Healthy Working Lives: a Plan for Action” in 2005. It draws together the traditional areas of Health Improvement, Occupational Health and Health & Safety to better co-ordinate workplace health policy.

Recognising the health and other benefits of being in work, Healthy Working Lives also seeks to promote employability, employment and retention particularly for hard to help groups such as people with physical or mental health conditions, substance misuse problems or the homeless.

**Edinburgh's Telford College Response**

Edinburgh’s Telford College is a ’Positive about Disabled People’ (two ticks) symbol holder and will adhere to the five commitments for this scheme. The College also strives to retain employees in employment should they become disabled during their employment with the College.

**Recommendation 18:** The Committee is of the view that the public sector should be setting an example in the employment of disabled people and the Committee recommends that public bodies should use the forthcoming Disability Equality Duty to establish and deliver exemplar practices in the employment of disabled people.

**Response:** We recognise that both the public and the private sectors have more to do in employing disabled people. As at 1 October 2006, 6% of staff in the employment of the Executive, its Agencies and associated Departments had declared themselves as disabled. The Scottish Executive’s Equality Scheme has now been published and we will be looking at our own human resource processes and how we may improve them further.

**Edinburgh's Telford College Response**

Edinburgh’s Telford College has published a Diversity and Equality scheme stating our Commitments to this scheme and has also produced an Action Plan to assist us in achieving our Commitments for staff students and stakeholders, working in or using our services.

**Recommendation 20:** The Committee recommends that all employers should be as flexible as possible in relation to the recruitment of disabled people and should strive to go beyond the minimum statutory requirements. In particular, the Committee recommends that the Disability Rights Commission and its successor, the Commission for Equality and Human Rights, should work with relevant personnel and recruitment professionals to develop and disseminate best practice in the conduct of interviews and the wider recruitment process as it relates to disabled people.

**Response:** We welcome this recommendation, but recognise that it is for the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and its successor to consider.
**Edinburgh’s Telford College Response**

Edinburgh’s Telford College is a ‘Positive about Disabled People’ (two ticks) symbol holder and will adhere to the five commitments for this scheme. The College will therefore strive to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy; ensure there is a mechanism in place to discuss, at any time, but at least once a year, with disabled employees what can be done to make sure they can develop and use their abilities; make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment; take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make the commitments work; review the five commitments and what has been achieved.

**Access to Further and Higher Education**

**Lifelong Learning strategy**

**Recommendation 36.** The Committee recommends that service provision to disabled people should be highlighted specifically, along with targets and implementation mechanisms, in any future update of the lifelong learning strategy published by the Scottish Executive.

Response: Our lifelong learning strategy, “Life through learning; Learning through life” was published in February 2003 and commits to the principles of equal opportunities.

We continue to work with our stakeholders and learning providers to ensure that they have the capacity to adapt their policies, approach and facilities to meet the needs of all Scotland’s learners.

We are currently consulting on a range of issues related to lifelong learning and we will be making sure that we listen closely to the views of those who provide learning to disabled learners, as well as to the learners themselves.

**Edinburgh’s Telford College Response**

The College has developed a Strategic approach to the mainstreaming of diversity and equality. This is lead by the D and E Strategic Planning Group, supported by an Operational Group which has representatives from all areas of the College. Appropriate targets and actions are included in the operational plans of all teams within the College. A Diversity and Equality Manager has been appointed who coordinates impact assessment of policies procedures and practices; involvement events, staff training and student support services.

**Scottish Executive – More Choices, More Chances**

**Recommendation 37:** The Committee recommends that specific work is done to ensure that the needs of young disabled people are fully taken into account throughout the implementation of the Scottish Executive Strategy ‘More Choices, More Chances’.
Response: Ministers have made clear that reducing NEET is a national priority which will take a national effort – from government, local authorities, the voluntary and private sectors – to achieve. Whilst the strategy highlights 7 target local authorities, More Choices More Chances is being implemented across Scotland. Every local partnership is receiving additional NEET funding and is required to have a NEET action plan and targets by end 2006.

We estimate that around 9% of young people who are NEET are inactive as a result of illness or disability. Additionally, young people identified as needing additional support under the Additional Support for Learning Act – which may include young disabled people – may be more likely to become NEET on leaving school. A priority for local partnerships is to get behind their headline NEET figures in order to fully understand the scale and nature of the NEET group and those most at risk of joining becoming NEET. We expect local partnerships to improve local baseline data for key NEET sub-groups, including young disabled people, and to evidence targeted interventions and improved outcomes for this group.

**Edinburgh's Telford College Response**

The College is part of the CEC NEET Partnership Strategy group and has worked with local community agencies to agree a local strategy for NEET reduction. We currently have a partnership with Careers Scotland and are actively involved with College 4U. We have a Community Development strategy in place which highlights our commitment to the More Choices More Chances Agenda. In addition we meet regularly with our Neighbourhood Schools and Local Youth Groups.

The College has an ASL Co-ordinator who works closely with both special and mainstream schools to identify specific needs. The College also has a Schools Liaison Officer who works with mainstream schools throughout the city to establish need. As a result the College now offers a range of full and part time transition courses as well as Skills for Work and mainstream provision.

**Mainstreaming equality in the further and higher Education sectors – Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council – self assessment evaluation**

**Recommendation 38**: The Committee welcomes the self-evaluation work done by the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council and recommends that it builds on this monitoring and evaluation work to take forward the mainstreaming agenda and to roll out good practice in service provision to disabled people across the sector.

**Response**: The Scottish Executive accepts this recommendation but recognises it is for the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council to take forward.
Edinburgh's Telford College Response
In order to ensure that we have an inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of students at all levels, the College has developed a set of curriculum maps which detail our course frameworks which range from Access Level 1 to HND.

Mainstreaming equality in the further and higher education sectors – monitoring and evaluation

Recommendation 39 The Committee recommends that all further and higher education providers seek stakeholder feedback in relation to the services that they provide and respond where appropriate.

Response: The Executive welcomes and supports this recommendation but recognises that it is a matter for Scottish Colleges, and Higher Education Institutions to implement.

Edinburgh’s Telford College Response
The College is committed to stakeholder involvement as evidenced through our partnerships and our regular surveys of stakeholders.

In addition, a number of staff, student and stakeholder involvement events were held during 06-07 and actions arising were either addressed immediately or fed into operational plans. There is a schedule of involvement events for 2007-08.

Legislative Awareness

Recommendation 40 The Committee recommends that further and higher education providers should develop mechanisms which allow them to go beyond the minimum specifications in the Disability Discrimination Act with regard to informing disabled students about their legal rights.

Response: The Executive welcomes and supports the recommendation but recognises that it is a matter for Scottish Colleges, and Higher Education Institutions to implement.

Edinburgh's Telford College Response
See response to question 36, which outlines the College’s mechanisms for ensuring that diversity and equality strategies are embedded throughout the college.

Our strategy included the use of involvement groups, Student Reps Forum, Students’ Union BME and Disability Officer, Disability Equality Scheme on website, policies and procedures on website, Student Handbook, information and support from the Student Services Team, one-to-one support where appropriate.

We also use the HMie Quality Framework to monitor our progress in this area through self evaluation.
Recommendation 41: The Committee welcomes the toolkit developed by the funding council to ensure that further and higher education providers comply with their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act and recommends that further and higher education providers make full use of it and other resources available to them.

Response: The Executive welcomes and supports the recommendation but recognises that it is a matter for Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Colleges, and Higher Education Institutions to implement.

**Edinburgh's Telford College Response**
The College has developed an Impact Assessment Toolkit based on models of best practice and has anticipated the likely integration of the 6 equality strands under one duty. Action planning will be an outcome of the Impact Assessment process; thereby meeting and exceeding our obligation to promote equality of opportunity, good relations and participation.

Recommendation 44: The Committee recommends that all providers, in conjunction with their disabled students, carry out a taking stock exercise of the information they provide to ensure it is appropriate and meets the needs of disabled students.

Response: The Executive welcomes and supports the recommendation but recognises that it is a matter for Scottish Colleges, and Higher Education Institutions to implement.

**Edinburgh's Telford College Response**
The college carries out student surveys, focus groups of particular student groups, feedback from Student Reps including student representative body and course teams.

We have applied QELTM guidelines and involved people with a disability in the revision and production of our support information and materials. We now have materials in a variety of formats.

**Careers Advice - schools**

Recommendation 49: The Committee recommends that there must be systematic planning from schools, the careers service and colleges or universities to ensure that the support a disabled student receives whilst in transition is seamless. The Committee notes that the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 may have the potential to achieve this. The Committee considers that the Scottish Executive should commission research to establish best practice in this area. (paragraph 759)

Response: As recommendation 45 and 46
Edinburgh’s Telford College Response

The College has partnership working arrangements with the Pathfinders educational Psychology referral services and the CEC Children and Families and Health and Social Care teams to include the Transition Team, Locally area co-ordinators and Through care and After care Team. A full-time Careers Scotland secondee also works in the College to provide support for transition

A Senior Manager has responsibility for Schools/College partnership strategy and monitors operational planning and achievement of targets in this area. There are regular meetings at senior management level with neighbourhood schools to assess pupils’ additional needs and agree appropriate provision. There are regular operational meetings between the College Schools’ Liaison Officer and school guidance staff as well as regular meetings and ongoing liaison with Careers Scotland to ensure planned provision. The College ASL Co-ordinator works with both special and mainstream schools to assess provision prior to starting College and provide tailored induction programmes.

Transition support - assessments

Recommendation 50: The Committee recommends that information on life changes likely to be experienced at college or university should be included in careers advice to young disabled people. The Committee

Edinburgh’s Telford College Response

This is included in the remit of the ASL Co-ordinator and the Schools Liaison Officer. Learner support experts and partners from disability organisations, as well as Careers Scotland attend open days and other information sessions in order to provide specialist advice.

Transition Support – early starts/familiarisation visits

Recommendation 52: In order to encourage more disabled learners to take advantage of early starts and familiarisation visits to acclimatise and to access and identify any additional requirements for support, the Committee recommends that—

- further and higher education providers should consider how best to provide early starts and familiarisation visits to disabled people as a matter of course, before students commence the academic year;
- the Student Awards Agency for Scotland works with further and higher education providers to publicise that early start support and funding is available to potential students; and
- Scottish Ministers explore how familiarisation visits could be funded to allow disabled students the opportunity to fully investigate their choice of further or higher education provider.

Response: The Scottish Executive, Student Awards Agency for Scotland and Institutions will continue to work together through the Disabled Student...
Stakeholder Group Forums to encourage and facilitate the uptake of early starts and familiarisation visits for disabled students.

**Edinburgh's Telford College Response**
We would welcome information from SAAS including feedback from stakeholder groups. Wider publicity on early start support and funding would also be welcomed.

Through the College’s existing application systems early identification of additional needs is a standard process. Learners are invited to come to the College for a pre-entry visit to look at facilities and discuss suitable support. In addition young people in transition have access to a 6 weeks transition course to familiarise them with College and its procedures.

**Disclosure**

Recommendation 55: In order to remove the barriers to disclosure and to ensure disabled learners receive appropriate services, the Committee recommends that—

- all further and higher education providers should develop and foster suitable procedures and environments to encourage students to disclose a disability; and

- further and higher education providers share techniques which will support a disabled person’s choice to disclose.

**Response:** The Executive understands the importance of disclosure but recognise that it is for the individual to choose and that it is a sensitive issue.

**Edinburgh’s Telford College Response**
There is an opportunity provided on the application form together with a reassuring statement that information is only required to identify support needs. The Student Services Team actively markets student support as a right for all students and encourages attendance at drop in sessions covering all aspects of student guidance and support for anyone with a query of difficulty. This includes advice on student support services at induction, in order to encourage disclosure. Throughout the course tutor support and a referral system is used to ensure that support needs are identified.

**Recommendation 56:** The Committee considers the issue of communication support to students to go much wider than British Sign Language interpretation and recommends that the Scottish Executive, the funding council and further and higher education providers should work together to investigate ways of increasing the availability of a comprehensive range of communication support to disabled students, such as Deafblind communicators, Palantypists, Makaton, graphic symbol charts, speech-to-text reporters and British Sign Language interpreters.
Response: We are committed to providing appropriate support to enable students to successfully undertake their studies. However there are limited numbers of people with the skills to provide the types of support suggested. We are investigating how their numbers can be increased.

Edinburgh's Telford College Response
The College has actively sought to establish partnerships with appropriate agencies to develop a range of communication strategies. Funding is made available for BSL and electronic notetaking support where required. The College also works closely with SQA to establish the most effective way of supporting students in assessment situations. A training budget has been identified to allow in house sign language training in BSL and support staff working with students with specific learning disabilities are trained in Makaton and Sign-along. A symbol system developed by the City of Edinburgh Council Health and Social Care Dept called Bonnington Symbols System is used on signage throughout the College and on assessment materials, timetables, ILP’s and marketing material.

Information and support materials are available in a variety of formats to include BSL and at present are working on having information available in Braille.

Recommendation 65: The Committee notes the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning’s desire to build on existing work in this area and recommends that the Scottish Executive devise a programme for increasing vocational training opportunities so that disabled learners can access them if they choose to do so.

Response: Colleges choose which types of awards they offer. Most College courses are vocational and therefore aimed at improving learners’ employability. Nationally-recognised awards endorsed by standard-setting bodies enhance learners’ job mobility. However, in some cases colleges consider that the level and units within these awards are not the best fit for their learners and instead opt to offer locally-devised programmes in line with the needs and aspirations of their learners. These programmes are generally vocational in nature.

Pupils of all abilities in S3 and above will be able to be considered for college learning opportunities. New Skills for Work courses are being piloted. These new practical courses in vocational areas emphasise employability skills. They will lead to nationally recognised qualifications as an alternative to one of more standard grade.

The Executive is committed to ensuring that, where possible, students with disabilities have the same opportunities to access further education as other students.

Edinburgh's Telford College Response
The College has a comprehensive Skills for Work programme which has been updated and expanded in line with SQA developments.
Support for students with complex needs

**Recommendation 67: The Committee, therefore, recommends that colleges should review existing provision with a view to developing courses and facilities appropriate for students with complex needs.**

**Response:** The Executive welcomes this recommendation but recognises it is for Scotland’s Colleges to implement.

**Edinburgh’s Telford College Response**

The College has a long standing Pathways programme which offers the choice of part time and full time courses in subject areas in line with the mainstream curriculum. Each one of the College’s curriculum areas offers at least one course at Pathways level. The courses are composed of Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) units (where available) at various Access levels, which allow the students to achieve nationally recognised certificates for their achievements.

This innovative approach challenges the traditional view that students with learning disabilities should be limited to general life skills courses with restricted subject choice. However, Pathways provides an opportunity to develop ‘life skills’ as an element of the vocational programme studied.

The College has a partnership with City of Edinburgh Council Health and Social Care Department (Social Work) to provide support for students. This joint venture is unique in the Scottish FE sector.

Pathways courses are reviewed annually (see response to Recommendation 65). This has resulted in an increase over the last 10 years to 36 part time course choices and 3 full time courses, across a broad spectrum of the curriculum. There is also a ongoing commitment from the College to work with SQA to expand the portfolio of courses that offer qualifications at this level.

**Recommendation 68: The Committee recommends that consideration should be given to funding provision for students with complex needs from the funding council, along with other further and higher education provision.**

**Response:** The Executive is committed to ensuring that, where possible, students with complex additional support needs have the same opportunities to access further education as other students.

That is why we launched a consultation exercise “Finding Practical Solutions to Complex Needs” in June 2005. We want to learn more about the practices of local authorities and to understand more about the support needed by young people with complex needs. The consultation closed on 31 October. We are currently considering how to move this issue forward.
**Edinburgh's Telford College Response**
We agree that consideration should be given to funding packages of support for students with complex needs as lack of the appropriate level of support often impacts adversely on student success.

**Recommendation 138: The Committee further recommends that public sector organisations ensure that they clearly publicise details of the accessibility of their services to ensure that those service users who may have individual access requirements are fully aware of what is available to them.**

**Response:** The Scottish Executive will work to publicise details of the accessibility of its services.

**Edinburgh's Telford College Response**
Information regarding the availability of information in different formats is published on website and on publicity materials. This information is also provided by Course information staff. Recruitment and promotional adverts are circulated in a range of community/ethnic minority press.

**Edinburgh’s Telford College**
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