THE ACTIVE INCLUSION NETWORK

Cork Education and Training Board Pilot Project
for Staff Development

ahead
Association for Higher Education Access & Disability

cetb
Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Chorcaí
*Cork Education and
Training Board*

CORK FET

I wouldn't change my children for the world but I will change the world for my children

- Further Education teacher quoting local mother of learners with disabilities

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Contents

Foreword

The Further Education and Training (FET) sector is diverse, both in its purpose and the learners it provides for. The range of education and training programmes provided are designed to meet the needs of a cohort of learners that reflects the full spectrum of ages, abilities, experiences and aspirations present in the wider community. This diversity contributes significantly to the richness of experience available to learners, but also creates a number of challenges for the staff responsible for the delivery and management of the programmes.

Several of the changes that the sector has experienced in recent years have highlighted the need for Further Education and Training to become more responsive to the requirements of learners with additional needs and disabilities. SOLAS, in its role of giving strategic direction to the sector, has highlighted the requirement to better provide for an increasingly diverse learner population. Cork Education and Training Board has, from its establishment, committed to providing a "pathway for every learner", a commitment that is reaffirmed in the Board's Strategy 2017-2021.

Cork Education and Training Board has engaged with AHEAD on this Active Inclusion pilot to identify a structure and approach for its Further Education and Training services that will further support staff in their efforts to meet the needs of learners with additional needs and disabilities, with a perspective that by focusing on better meeting these learners' requirements, the experience of ALL learners is enhanced. From the outset we recognised that there was significant good practice occurring in many of the Further Education and

Training Centres and services, however this lacked a unified and formal structure, and more importantly possibly, the necessary resources and supports. The purpose of the Active Inclusion pilot has been to create a model that can be expanded beyond the initial small group of centres and staff, to all of Cork ETB's FET service and the wider FET sector.

The positive outcomes from the pilot and the learnings gleaned from it are in no small part due to the commitment and engagement of the staff from the participating colleges. These staff members, the Champions, have proven prior track records in the championing of provision for learners with additional needs and disabilities. I would like to thank them, and the management of the colleges who not only facilitated the Champions' involvement, but who are fully committed to providing a better experience for all their learners, for their engagement, professionalism and ongoing commitment to the Active Inclusion agenda.

Finally, I would like to thank AHEAD who have supported the pilot from initial concept to this report. As always, the staff from AHEAD have provided invaluable leadership, assistance and insights.

John Fitzgibbons
Director of Further Education and Training

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Because of the help I have received I have the confidence to come back to do something else.

- Learner, 30 with Dyslexia

01

Listening and responding to the learner voice is a key requirement if the learner is to be fully involved in their educational experience, and is fundamental if their educational experience is to be positive and affirming for the individual. As part of this project the Disability Champions in the Cork FET colleges asked learners with disabilities simply: What worked for them, and what was difficult?.

The following is a sample of what the learners said was important:

> I liked that I knew I could contact you if I had a problem with anything. You gave me your email address at the start of the year and showed me how to make appointments with you. We met lots throughout the year and it was good. I got to do all of my exams on a computer which is best for me.

- Learner, 20, with ASD

> I had a day off every week (Friday) and I found this brilliant. It gave me time to catch up on study.

- Learner, 41, with a Mental Health Condition

"

You got me sorted straight away when I told you I was struggling to manage my assignments...

I found it really helpful to have the notes put up on Google classroom. I liked it because I could look up the class notes from home or wherever I was. Not all of the teachers were as good at putting stuff up though so I recommend that all of the teachers use it and put the notes up on it in time.

- Learner, 18, with Dyslexia

In class the teacher used maps online for everyone so I didn't feel like I was the only one not able to use the map on the wall. The Disability Officer encouraged me to register with the NCBI. She will send them my booklist for next year and I will access them on their digital library.

- Learner, 52, with Impaired Vision

I feel that the social support really helped too because I had been really isolated before I came to college and was afraid meeting new people. In the [...] course we were brought for coffees and visited art galleries... This support really helped me and I would really like to see more of that in other courses because for everyone the social part can be difficult.

- Learner, 26, with a Mental Health Condition

I knew where to go if I had a problem with anything. You got me sorted straight away when I told you I was struggling to manage my assignments... You also helped me with CAO so I'm really hoping I get a place in LIT.

- Learner, 18, with Dyslexia

I tried to hide my difficulty with reading and writing. I was quite embarrassed about it. It took me a while to learn to trust the teachers and learner support. I left school very early in Nigeria and had a difficult experience... I think the relationship that learners have with teachers is very important, the support gives me courage.
– Learner, 38, with Dyslexia

What is clear from learners' answers is that they value the positive relationship with their teachers and they benefit from understanding and supports.

Overview of the Pilot Active Inclusion Network

01   INTRODUCTION

Further Education and Training (FET) has seen significant changes in the recent past not least of which is the huge diversity of learners[1] enrolling on these courses, including mature learners, learners with disabilities, learners of different cultures and backgrounds, ages and sexual orientation.

Although to date there is little national research on the participation of these diverse groups, we do know that it is a national priority to support and promote the quality of the learning experience of all learners across further education (SOLAS, 2014, 2016, DES, 2018). This is illustrated in SOLAS's Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 (2014) and Professional Development Strategy (2017-2019) which prioritises the increase of active inclusion of all citizens including those most disadvantaged by providing high quality, supported education and training.

A SOLAS report that reviewed the accessibility in Further Education and Training argued that there was a lack of support to enable active citizens with disabilities to participate (SOLAS, 2017). The rights of people with disabilities is recognised in national and international legalisation (Equal Status Act 2000; Disability Act 2005; Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2012; UNHRPD, 2007).

1 Learner is used throughout this report to refer to the learners engaged with through the pilot.

In light of the increasingly diverse student population entering the Further Education sector, it is important that there is capacity building within the sector so that systems and teaching methods across the sector are designed to deliver a quality learning experience to all their prospective learners.

SOLAS is committed to the concept of Active Inclusion and recognises that staff in professional roles require support and training to manage an ever-changing learning environment (SOLAS, 2016). In 2017, Cork Education and Training Board reported almost 30,000 learners engaged in a broad range of Further Education and Training programmes. The Cork ETB Strategy (2017-2021) acknowledges the need to build capacity to deal with the changing needs of this diversity of learners. (CETB, 2017). The Strategy (CETB, 2017) confirms that Cork ETB is committed to supporting inclusive education in line with national policy, and they agreed to the introduction of a pilot Active Inclusion Network in collaboration with AHEAD.

The Active Inclusion Network is built on the concept of peer-to-peer learning and it is designed to provide professional staff with an opportunity to exchange good practices and innovations. This will enable members to learn from each other and to ultimately build capacity within the ETB to become more inclusive across the whole institution.

The Active Inclusion Network is a pilot to support staff working across Further Education Colleges[2] in Cork ETB through creating reflective spaces for staff to explore Universal Design for Learning as a positive solution to including diversity in their own work.

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2 In this initial phase of the pilot CETB focussed on the colleges, but with the intention of developing the approach across all FET programmes and activity

In managing diversity in education, AHEAD promotes the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) because it is designed to include all learners in the learning process. Borrowed from The Universal Design movement in architecture it is defined as the

design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

When we bring this concept into education we are asking educators to design the curriculum and lesson plans so that all learners can have a quality learning experience in the classroom.

This report will describe how an Active Inclusion Network was used as a strategy to upskill and ultimately empower staff in Cork ETB through sharing learning about best practices on inclusive education.

1.1 THE VISION FOR THE ACTIVE INCLUSION NETWORK (AIN)

To address the challenges facing staff in FET in building inclusive educational environments for all learners, in particular learners with disabilities, AHEAD in partnership with Cork ETB set up an Action Learning Network designed to facilitate opportunities for staff to upskill and share their expertise.

1.2 THE AIM OF THE ACTIVE INCLUSION NETWORK (AIN)

To support CETB to build an infrastructure that is inclusive of learners with a disability through piloting a peer-to-peer learning network for staff working in the FET sector. The network proposes that a framework of Universal Design for Learning is used to provide practical tools and methodologies that staff can use as part of their ongoing provision of inclusive learning practices for learners with disabilities across the colleges.

The Active Inclusion Network was built around two key values:

— Universal Design for Learning as a way of thinking about how to include a diversity of learners in education
— Action learning as a mechanism to build capacity for inclusive practice

1.3 Universal Design FOR LEARNING (UDL): A DEFINITION

So why UDL? Universal Design for Learning is a new approach to curriculum design that addresses the learning needs of all learners. Originally developed by Dr David Rose from The Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST) it argues that if a learning environment and practice is designed with all types of learners in mind then this will encourage greater engagement from learners and help them succeed. AHEAD promotes UDL as the best concept for building a flexible and inclusive learning environment.

According to Novak (2017, p. 43) UDL is based on the "concept of creating spaces where all learners can be educated, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation". This concept underpins UDL and recognises that there is variety in the classroom and that every learner is different - in fact there is no such thing as the average learner.

1.3.1 Universal Design for Learning is based on three key principles:

— **Multiple means of representation**

Providing different ways to present or represent course content to allow all learners to have an equal chance to meet the learning outcomes.

— **Multiple means of expression and action**

Giving learners the opportunity to practice and demonstrate their learning by providing alternative methods to express their understanding on an ongoing basis, providing regular feedback to motivate the learner e.g. discussion forums/groups, self-reflection journal, oral presentation. Some examples are illustrated below.

— **Multiple means of engagement**

Encouraging alternative means and formats for learners to interpret and interact with the course material to support different forms of learning and engagement amongst learners. Below are some examples of ways to apply this principle in the learning environment.

These principles can be applied to the planning and delivery of lessons for all learners in mainstream classrooms giving them flexibility and choice in what and how they learn, engage and represent their learning.

1.3.2 The Pyramid for Inclusion

LEVEL 4
Personal Assistant

LEVEL 3
Individual accommodation

LEVEL 2
Students with similar needs

LEVEL 1
Universal Design
for the majority
of students

SPECIAL

GENERAL
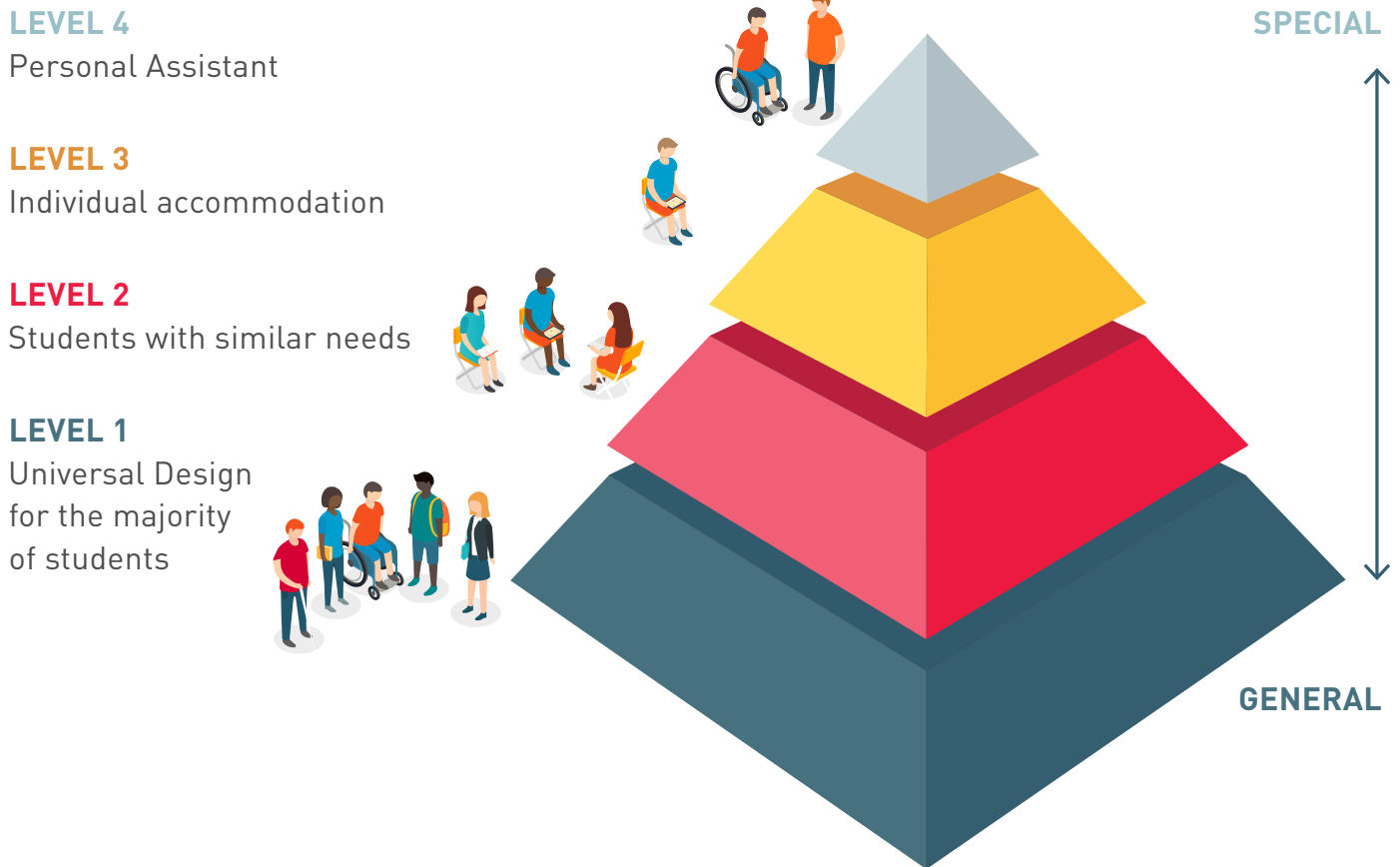
Figure 1

AHEAD Inclusive Education Pyramid

The above image of the Inclusive Education Pyramid (UDLL 2016) illustrates the different levels of learner support required within an inclusive education environment model in line with UDL principles.

LEVEL 1

Universal Design for the majority of learners - the base layer of the pyramid demonstrates how the majority of learner supports are to be facilitated as part of mainstream teaching and learning environment.

LEVEL 2

Learners with similar needs look to facilitate peer support for learners that require additional supports.

LEVEL 3

Individual Accommodation relates to the learners who require a Needs Assessment with specialist services (i.e. Disability Support Services), which might involve Assistive Technology or some other Reasonable Accommodation to enable them to participate fully in the learning experience.

LEVEL 4

Personal Assistant - at the top of the pyramid, this relates to the smallest proportion of learners who would need more personal, professional supports as part of their Needs Assessment e.g. use of a Personal Assistant on campus or a reader or scribe during exams.

Reasonable Accommodations: A Reasonable Accommodation (RA) is a legal requirement to enable a learner with a disability to compensate with the impact of their disability. These arrangements can be defined as any facility or action which is not part of the mainstream provision of the learning setting (level1 in the pyramid) which enables the learner to participate on the course and without which he/she would be educationally disadvantaged in comparison with their peers. RAs are put in place at levels 2, 3 and 4 of the pyramid and might involve changing procedures, providing additional services or altering the physical environment (AHEAD, 2016).

Needs Assessment: A Needs Assessment is a systematic process for the collection of information and data upon which to base an accurate description of the strengths and learning needs of a particular individual. It forms the basis for planning the provision of Reasonable Accommodations for students who need them (AHEAD, 2016).

1.4 ACTION LEARNING

Action Learning is a continuous process of learning and reflection, designed to support colleagues doing similar work to exchange their ideas and good practices and collectively solve any problems they may have. Based on Kolb's Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) it encourages people doing similar jobs to tackle real life problems, to learn from each other and through dialogue to come up with solutions that will be applicable in their own work situation. It is an opportunity for staff within organisations and from across different colleges and functions to come together to gather ideas, to share their perspectives and to learn from their own and the experiences of others in order to change their practices. The group members both support and challenge each other throughout the pilot on their journey towards inclusive practice. An innovative aspect of the network was the opportunities created to share learning across sectors with speakers from the higher education sector and the disability community.
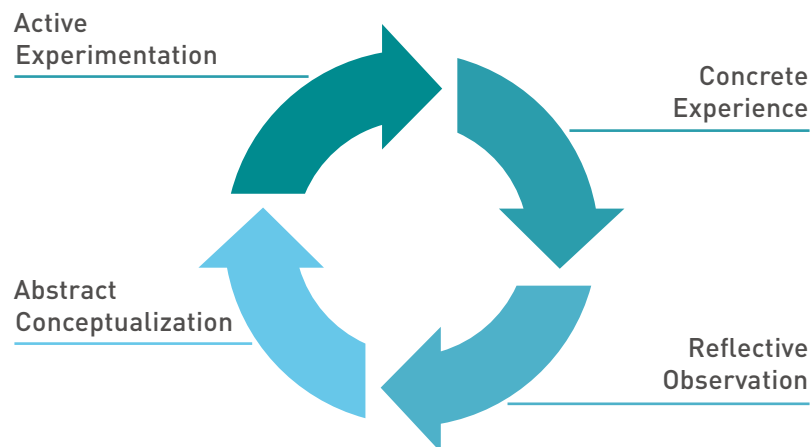
Figure 2 Image of Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning

According to Sanford (1981: Dixon, 1999)

Development occurs primarily in response to challenges of life... development occurs in context.

Learning is a continuous and reflective process of improvement.

The 4 pillars of the Active Learning Network

1   **Member led:** The work of the group is directed by key areas identified by the group members and informed by experts across the relevant fields.

2   **Time:** The network was provided with time to review and act on key areas identified throughout the process of the pilot.

3   **Grounded in the work:** Members were consistently immersed in their respective roles throughout the pilot therefore allowing them to reflect and apply the learning of the network throughout the process.

4   **Community centred learning:** A community of resources and supports were created by members having the opportunity to meet and learn from each other's existing good practice and insight.

Give us time and space to communicate with each other

-Member of AIN, network meeting, September 2017

02 The Process

2.1 DISABILITY CHAMPIONS APPOINTED

Each college that participated in the pilot nominated a staff member to be 'The Disability Champion' who would fulfil the role of supporting the implementation of the Active Inclusion Network training and disseminate information within their respective college.

The Disability Champions

Champions (L-R) : Colette Twomey (St. John's College), Helen Carey (Cork College of Commerce), Lynda O'Connor (Kinsale College), Carol Neenan (Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa), Suzanne Powell (Mallow College)

2.2   THE FIRST MEETING: TAKING STOCK

The first task of the facilitator (AHEAD) was to engage the group, to enable the network members to get to know each other and to meet other staff within Cork ETB doing similar work. All participating staff were involved with learners with disabilities either as Disability Officer, Assistive Technology Support, as teachers or a combination of roles, and they discussed their experiences of creating inclusive learning environments and their strategies for supporting learners with disability.

The group identified what they felt was working well within their college, and areas that required improvement and development in order to improve the approach to inclusive education within CETB. A positive outcome of the first meeting of the network was the identification of the need for further training and development which would be addressed over the course of the pilot. This was important to enable the group to take ownership of the development of the network with AHEAD in a facilitating role coordinating the content and structure of the network events in accordance to the group's needs.

The approach of the forthcoming meetings was also open to allow for topics and concerns to emerge which contributed to shape, structure and content of meetings held over the period of the pilot.

At the first meeting the group were asked the question:

What works, and what are the challenges?

What works:

The group agreed that the strengths underpinning their teaching practices were the capacity to be:

— learner centred
— creative
— engaging
— authentic
— flexible

The group brainstormed, teasing out collectively what they are most proud of and what motivates them in their work. They identified the practices that they felt were working very well across their colleges in CETB, as the following:

— We the teachers value open dialogue with learners during their studies.
— We use creative teaching methods
— We value the flexibility that QQI structures allow
— The QQI learning outcomes are practical and are aligned with workplace needs
— We create an open and supportive culture in the classroom
— We facilitate learner autonomy and independence
— We have trust from learners in supporting them
— We have a positive and open-minded outlook to the teaching process

A common shared value that emerged from this discussion is the significance of the relationship between teachers and learners. Teachers value the richness that a diversity of learners brings to the classroom and they saw learner engagement as a strength of the FET sector and critical to learner success.

When dealing with a diverse learner group, providing choice and flexibility are important. The group were used to dealing with diversity of learners and recognised that different learners required different supports, such as language and academic supports. At a practical level the learner-centred approach to teaching in operation within the ETB enabled them to address most of the issues facing learners.

What are the challenges?

There were also a number of challenges identified that were causing operational difficulties for the group and these were identified as topics for exploration by the Active Inclusion Network.

One of the priorities the group identified was the absence of dedicated expertise within the ETB, such as an educational psychologist, to scaffold staff development in the area of inclusive practice and understanding of disability in education. There was unanimous agreement that staff needed to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of disabilities/conditions in the educational environment and how they could support the learner in the classroom. They required more information about the resources that would make their teaching more accessible for learners and greater supports for the Disability Officer in what is a new role.

The group identified the following areas of improvement

— Clarity around role of disability support staff - what is their role in FET?.
— More information is required about supports for learners.
— A more standardised approach to admissions, disclosure, Needs Assessment and exiting learners across the ETB.
— Cross-campus support and implementation of inclusive practice.
— To address the attitude of staff not open to making changes.
— To remove the stigma around further education as a lessor sector across the education sector
— More flexibility in the interpretation of authenticators of flexible assessment methods.
— More time to reflect and alter teaching methods to best support learners.

— The need for policies and procedures to support learners with disabilities.
— More information on how to be inclusive.

The unanimous view of the group was that the development of inclusive learning practice requires capacity building, in particular support for staff managing diversity (including disability) on a day to day basis. Areas identified for development were:
— The use of technology in education.
— Needs Assessment and identifying what is a Reasonable Accommodation.
— Equality legislation and the legal framework.
— Knowledge and understanding of supporting learners with mental health issues, sensory disabilities and specific learning difficulties.

Dedicated expertise is needed at an ETB level to support staff in relation to issues such as the inclusive classroom, managing learners with mental health condition, Asperger's syndrome and other more complex conditions. These issues mirror the challenges identified the AHEAD Conference on 2017 where FET staff raised concerns about the need to bring greater coherence and guidelines to the role of the Disability Officer throughout the FET sector (see appendix).

Following on from the first network meeting where the group identified key training and information needs, AHEAD drafted an overall plan to provide structure and continuity to guide the pilot so that all of the topics raised were addressed. Therefore, it was decided to address the topics using a combination of network meetings to provide a space for open dialogue and information sharing within the group, supported by a series of expert led Spotlight Seminars made available to a broader audience of staff throughout Cork ETB. Throughout all aspects of the exercises and discussions regarding inclusive education, AHEAD ensured that UDL principles were at the core throughout the project.

2.3 SCHEDULE FOR NETWORK MEETINGS AND SPOTLIGHT SEMINARS

DATE		SPOTLIGHT SEMINAR AND NETWORK MEETING SCHEDULE
2017	26 OCT	Network meeting on current policies and procedures
	23 NOV	Spotlight Seminar on Needs Assessment
	18 DEC	Network meeting on the network- resource and coordination Training: introduction to the Digital Badge course
	19 DEC	Spotlight Seminar 'One size does not fit all': Universal Design, executive function and Assistive Technology
2018	1 FEB	Online Network meeting about roles & responsibilities, and research on the make-up of learners with disabilities in the sector
	21 FEB	Spotlight Seminar: Mental Wellbeing
	19 APR	Network meeting: Draft and agree policies and procedures to support learners with disabilities on campus Training: Risk Assessment
	29 MAY	Network meeting: Reflection
	26 SEP	Network meeting: Review draft report and graduation ceremony for Digital Badge

2.3.1 Network Meetings

Cork ETB and the College Principals who facilitated staff involvement in the AIN pilot recognised the value of collaborative working and allocated the time to develop the network. There were a total of 4 Active Inclusion Network meetings at intervals throughout the year which explored a number of issues around the admission and accommodations of learners with support requirements. It was agreed that the group would meet up for a 2 hour meeting every 2 months and that there would be 4 training events addressing topics identified within the group and delivered by external experts[1].

Throughout the meetings members teased out key issues they were experiencing on the ground, sharing resources and good practice methods from each of their colleges. To help apply some of the learning from the training sessions and implement a framework for inclusive education which would fit within their further education setting the group also looked at developing policies and procedures which would support the standardisation of their work across all colleges.

The following provides a breakdown of what was covered as part of each meeting throughout the pilot.

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1 The relevant Cork ETB College Principals came on board to allow teachers time out of the classroom in order to attend these meetings.

26TH OCTOBER - ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

At this meeting the group discussed the pre-existing policies and procedures in place across the colleges to support learners with disabilities.

Key points raised:

1   Concerns were raised about the undocumented learners who required supports. Medical verification is required for application to The HEA Fund for Students with Disabilities but over 50% of learners presenting lacked appropriate documents. Clarification was requested from CETB on their legal obligation to support them.

2   A need to standardise a Needs Assessment process to identify appropriate learner supports.

3   The need to scope the profile of learners with disabilities across the different colleges.

It was suggested at this meeting that it would be beneficial to have an online platform to share examples of good practices amongst the group.

18TH DECEMBER - RADISSION BLU, LITTLE ISLAND

Meeting:
The group shared information on their experience of the process of application for HEA Funding for PLC learners.

Key points raised:

1   Concerns were expressed about the late arrival of the HEA funding for students with disabilities in the first semester (around December) and how this was putting pressure on the colleges to support learners' needs with little to no resources before the fund arrived.

2   There is a need to formally recognise and professionalise the role of the Disability Officer in Further Education and ensure that they are allocated sufficient time and resources in order to carry out their role at leading the college in creating an inclusive learning environment.

3   Looking at the ongoing support of The AIN, the members proposed the idea of appointing someone in CETB to coordinate their ongoing work and provide an information resource on funding and resource options for supporting learners with disabilities.

1ST FEBRUARY - ONLINE MEETING

This meeting was organised to address some of the key areas identified from previous network meetings including coordinating the data collection of the learners with disabilities within each college, drafting standardised policies and procedures to support learners with disabilities. The group also discussed how they were progressing with the Digital Badge (see Certification). This meeting was hosted over Skype.

Key points raised:

— The group reviewed some existing policies to support learners with disabilities from CETB as part of the ongoing work to draft a standardised model which would support learners with disabilities in further education.

19TH APRIL - MALLOW COLLEGE

Key points raised:

The group discussed a draft policies and procedures document based on key areas of concern raised by the group over the previous few months.

The group agreed that they were happy with the content and that the procedures therein could help them support learners at various stages of their education in an inclusive manner.

This document was then circulated again for any further comments, updated and circulated to ensure consensus. As part of the discussion on procedures the group also discussed and agreed in principle on the Needs Assessment process and its role in supporting students in FET.

29ᵀᴴ MAY – ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

The aim of this meeting was to review the progress of the AIN so far. The purpose of this meeting was to reflect and record the experience of the group of the AIN pilot.

Key points raised:

1   The group stated that the network allowed them for the first time in their work to get together with colleagues and to share experiences and resources, it was very helpful.

2   There was a strong sense of collegiality and community and the group members were contacting each other to discuss approaches and difficulties.

3   The network brought them together to form a strong support network which has been a valuable resource for key learner support information and innovative practice over the course of the academic year and going forward.

4   The network had changed mindsets and overall awareness of the needs of the learners they work with.

5   It has given them a new way of thinking and confidence to carry out their teaching practice.

6   Change will take time to implement cross-campus in their colleges and the wider ETB level. The members stressed the need for ongoing work to develop inclusive practice across all of the courses and services including authentication[2].

7   Looking forward to the future of the group, those in attendance mentioned how they would look to set up a private folder on the CETB Sharepoint to allow them to continue to share resources and would like to organise two physical meetings per academic year if possible.

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2 During the course of the project, a local authenticator questioned the validity of alternative methods used by one AIN member as part of their learner assessment. This illustrated a possible need for further training at a regional level with authenticators on the principles of UDL and how they benefit the learner populace.

2.3.2 Upskilling and Training

Over the course of the project AHEAD coordinated a range of professionals from across the education and public sector to provide training and information sessions in response to the needs identified.

Needs Assessment

Lorraine Gallagher, Information and Training Officer from AHEAD gave a presentation on the purpose and process of a Needs Assessment. The group discussed the different approaches each college had to the Needs Assessment process currently and the AHEAD Needs Assessment template was circulated. Lorraine encouraged all staff in attendance to review their Needs Assessment practice in line with some of the resources AHEAD had produced on this area.

Executive Functioning

Figure 3 Helen Carroll, DIT presenting at the 'One size does not fit all' seminar

Helen Carroll, Learning Support Officer in DIT, gave an input on executive functioning to the group; looking at the way we learn and how educators can harness executive functioning skills to enhance inclusive education. Helen identified some useful exercises which can support learning e.g. a bullet journal and some online resources before listing effective teaching principles for all educators to utilise said skills.

Universal Design as a concept

Shane Hogan, ICT Advisor from The National Disability Authority gave an overview of Universal Design including a range of modern design flaws which exist across a range of public service, products and environments. Shane also highlighted some key resources to support accessible best practice.

James Hubbard, Senior Design Advisor in The National Disability Authority (NDA) gave a presentation on key guidelines, standards and the NDA toolkits based on a Universal Design approach. James explained the principles and benefits of having a more Universal Design approach to teaching. In his presentation, James highlighted The NDA's 'Customer Communications Toolkit for the Public Service a Universal Design Approach' and the need for adjustability in providing universally applicable services.

Embedding Assistive Technology in learning

Linda Doran, Head of Service and Assistive Technology Officer in UCC provided those in attendance at the training event in December with an outline of what Assistive Technology is, the various types of technologies used to support learners with disabilities and best practice procedures in supporting learners using Assistive Technology in college.

Universal Design for Learning

Ann Heelan, Executive Director of AHEAD carried out several sessions over the course of the pilot on the principles and best practice guidelines on Universal Design for Learning for Further Education and Training.

Figure 4 Members of the cork group from CCOC with Helen Carroll, DIT and Ann Heelan, AHEAD

Strategies for supporting learners with mental health

Mary Quirke, Business Development Director from AHEAD explained the work that has been done to date by AHEAD in promoting the support of learners with a mental health condition at secondary, at third level education and into employment. Mary spoke about key findings from research carried by AHEAD on this topic and referred to the final publication 'Mental Health Matters'. She spoke about how the research identified key barriers learners with mental health difficulties have when trying to engage in tertiary education at present and the ongoing national advocacy AHEAD are involved in to secure that the needs of this cohort are met.

Suzanne McCarthy, Chartered Educational Psychologist from The National Learning Network (NLN) provided a session on strategies to support learners with mental health across campus and the general promotion of inclusive education by implementing a UDL approach. Suzanne then explained about her involvement in The Learner Central Programme in Maynooth University, which provides a tailored, holistic support for learners with mental health difficulties in Maynooth University. She suggested some practical tips on inclusive teaching supports and accommodations which benefit learners with mental health difficulties.

Mindfulness

Carol Neenan, Disability Champion in The AIN and Teacher in Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa provided some practical tips on mindfulness and highlighted some useful mindfulness exercises which could be used to support learner resilience.

Risk Assessment

Ann Heelan, AHEAD provided a training session on the role and process involved with risk assessments in an inclusive learning environment focusing on boundary management and fitness to practice. Ann discussed with the group some existing concerns regarding risk assessment in their own colleges and made suggestions on how to address these issues systematically through the process she then highlighted in her presentation.

Figure 5

Figure 5 Mary Quirke, AHEAD presenting on Mental Health Matters
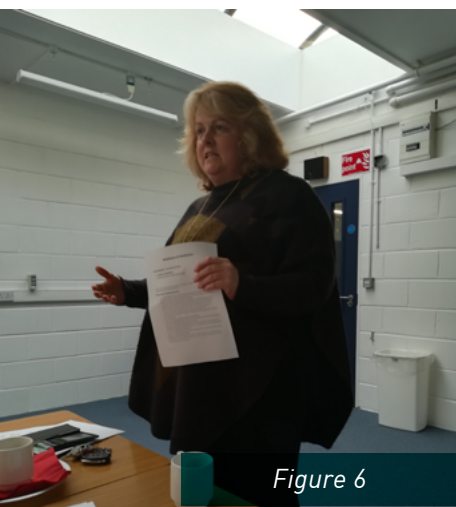
Figure 6 Carol Neenan, CSN presenting on mindfulness

Figure 7 Suzanne McCarthy, NLN presenting on strategies for supporting learners with mental health conditions in education

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 8 Ann Heelan, AHEAD presenting on risk assessment

Figure 9 Group work exercise looking at importance of holistic support for different learner profiles

Figure 9

03 Network Outputs

3.1 RESEARCH

3.1.1 Survey on the number of learners with a disability in the participating CETB Colleges

During the course of the pilot, a survey was carried out of the participation of learners with disabilities within each college. The aim was to provide a snapshot of the profile of learners with disabilities to advise future teaching practice. It was decided that the group would carry out both quantitative and qualitative research on the learners with disabilities in their respective colleges. In February 2018, AHEAD coordinated a survey on the number and categories of learners with disabilities (registered with the disability services) within each member college for the academic term 2016/2017[1]. In May 2018, the Disability Champions, with the support of the Disability Officers collected a number of case studies on the experiences of learners with disabilities within each college. This research was carried out under significant time restraints for members with many compiling it in their spare time.

1 Methodology: The 2016/2017 academic year was selected by the group as it was proposed that it would be best to accurately capture the total number of learners that registered with the disability services within a completed year.

The accumulative data provided by the colleges provided some insight into the range of students with disabilities represented across the five colleges and the demand on each college to support their diverse needs. Across the five CETB colleges in The AIN supported approximately 400 students (399) in 2016/2017.

When we look at this by category of disability, the three highest categories of disabilities across the colleges (disregarding the 'Other' category) were Specific Learning Difficulty (158 learners, 40%), Autism Spectrum Disorder (61 learners, 15%) and Mental Health (40 learners, 10%). A full breakdown of the categories of learners with disabilities that were registered with the disability services across the colleges is provided in the adjacent graph.

While over 40% have specific learning difficulty, it was also understood from those working on the ground that there is a growing number of students with mental health difficulties registering in further education in CETB. We also identified from the accumulative data and through the network meetings with staff involved in the network that roughly 60% of the learners supported by the disability support staff did not receive any funding to facilitate their support. When we compared the statistics provided by each college to the national statistics on the students in receipt of The HEA Fund for Students with Disabilities across each member college we could see that there was a significant portion of students who were registered with a disability, supported by the respective colleges without any state funding. An example of divergence can be seen in *figure 11* of the student support data compiled on one of the member colleges, Cork College of Commerce, which illustrates that of the 152 students registered with the disability service in 2016/'17 60% received funded supported, while the remaining 40% were supported without funding by the disability support service.

Other
11%

ASD
15%

ADD/ADHD
1%

Blind/visually impaired
2%

Deaf/hard of hearing
3%

DCD - Dyspraxia/
Dysgraphia
7%

Mental Health
Condition
10%

Neurological Conditions/
Speech & language disability
4%

Significant ongoing illness
4%

Physical disability
4%

Specific Learning Difficulties
(Dyslexia/Dyscalculia)
40%
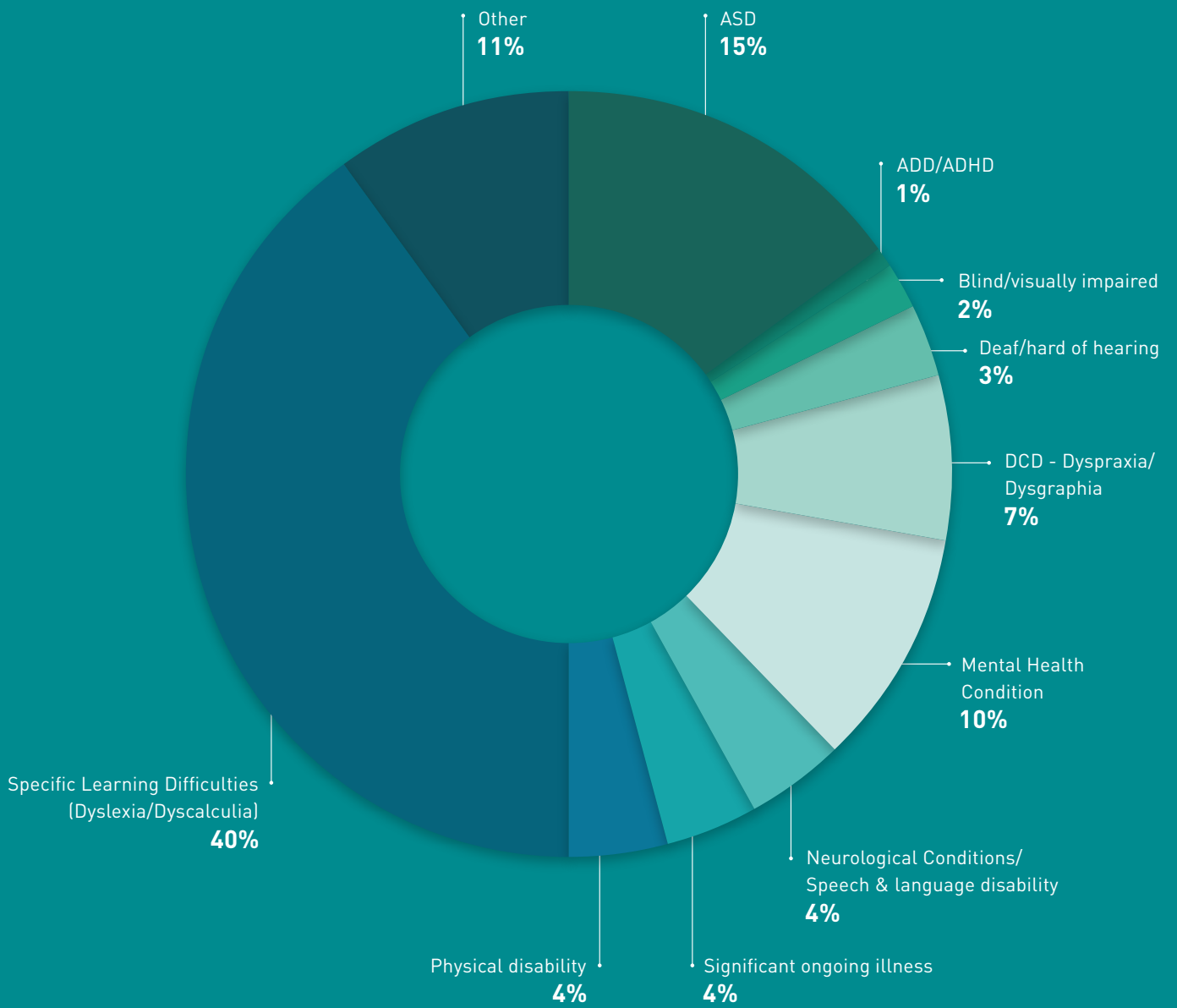
Figure 10 Breakdown of categories of learners by disability
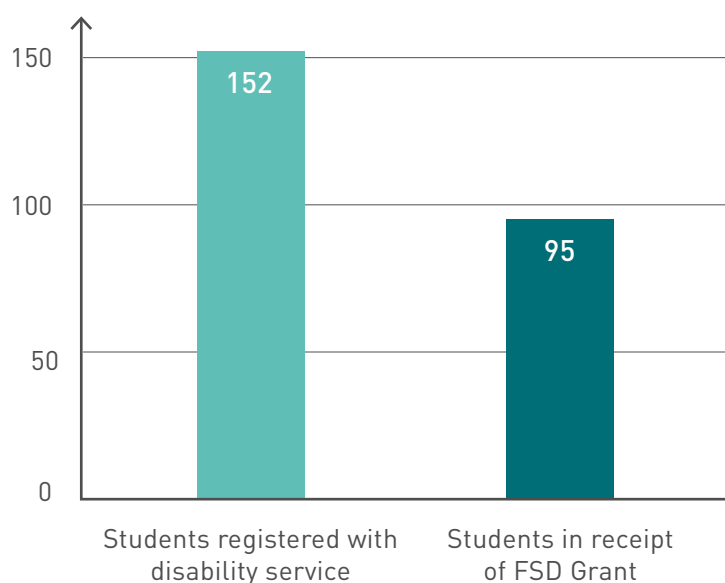
Figure 11 illustrates the number of students registered with the disability service against the number of those who received state funding for their supports with one of the colleges. Cork College of Commerce in 2016/2017

AHEAD knows from our research on the participation of students with disabilities across higher education institutions that the number of students within this cohort is increasing year-on-year, and the accumulative data from the network also indicates that this trend is also experienced in further education. Therefore it is imperative that there is adequate support in place for these students to progress in their education and that the staff are equipped to facilitate them on this journey.

Management of disability support across the colleges

As part of the network meetings, the group discussed the management of disability support across Further Education, focussing in particular on the following questions;

— What is the role of the Disability Officer in FET?
— How can UDL be addressed in their colleges?

What do supports look like?

The group considered their own role of disability support to be a key role in building inclusive learning environments. This is a new and emerging role within the further education system and the group sought clarity about the definition of the role and its responsibilities. They identified a lack of consistency in how the role was managed and carried out across the colleges - see appendix 7.3 for further details. The group noted how the complexity of their role in supporting learners with disabilities in further education was not fully appreciated or balanced to allow them to meet the responsibilities they had across their role in the college i.e. providing disability support in addition to teaching, managing staff or career guidance. They reflected on how the Disability Officer role was outlined within a UDL framework and agreed that within a further education context the role of disability support consists of:

1   Supporting learners making the transition to FET
2   Working with individual learners with a range of disability and mental health difficulties and advising on appropriate supports
3   Procuring supports and accommodations for learners
4   Conducting Needs Assessment to identify Reasonable Accommodations and to ensure legal compliance
5   Raising awareness in the campus about inclusive practice
6   Supporting and advising staff across the campus on how to adapt their teaching to be inclusive
7   Liaising with staff across the campus in relation to making adaptations to their teaching practice to support learner learning
8   Providing information and resources to both staff and learners
9   Procuring technology
10 Providing technology to learners who required it
11 Making applications to the fund for students with disabilities where applicable
12 Liaising with external bodies such as disability and community organisations as well as schools

3.2   Certification
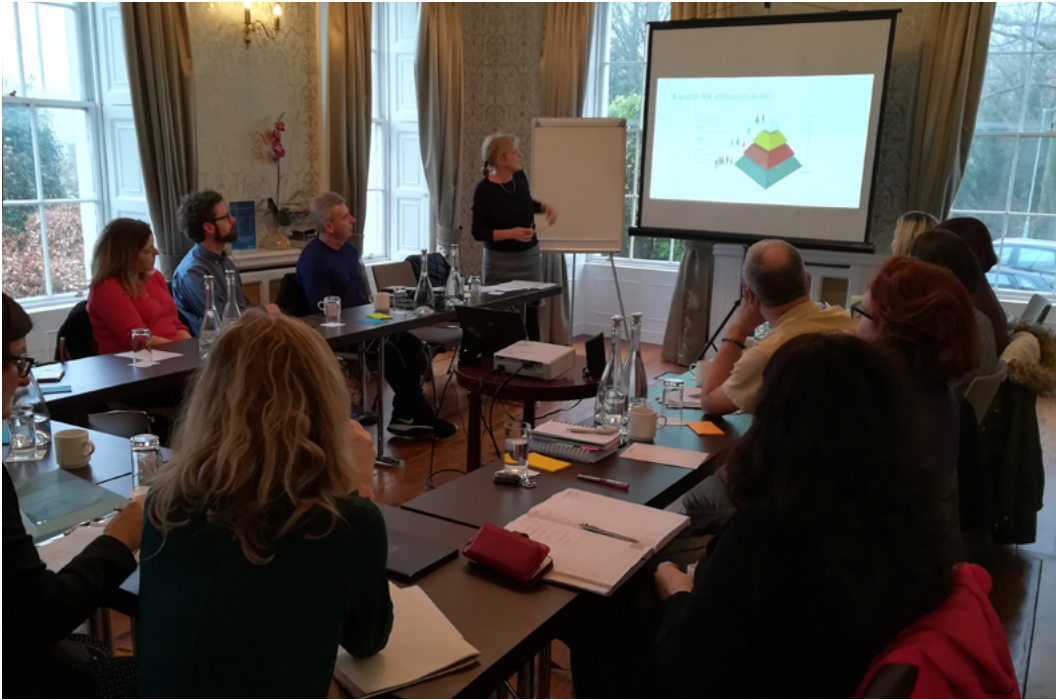
Figure 12 Ann Heelan facilitating the introduction to The Digital Badge

3.2.1 The Digital Badge on Universal Design for Teaching and Learning

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning have developed in collaboration with higher education a suite of non-accredited continuous professional development programmes called Digital Badges. AHEAD, in partnership with The UCD Access and Lifelong Learning Centre have developed 'The Digital Badge on Universal Design for Teaching and Learning'. The programme, which takes a blended approach, requires about 25 hours of learner effort in total. Every participant who completes the course receives The Teaching and Learning Forum's Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning which is an online award that can be linked to a participants' online professional profile with an outline of the key skills achieved as part of this course.

Members of the network and any interested colleagues across the member colleges were invited to take part in the Digital Badge course, facilitated by AHEAD as part of the ongoing work of the AIN group. There was unanimous interest from members of the network who signed up along with a number of additional staff from across the colleges. This provided members of the network and their colleagues the opportunity to implement the accumulative learning they've gained on inclusive education.

The course was completed by almost 70% of the group, with the remainder due to complete their final assignments in the next academic year (2018-2019). As part of the final assessment of the Digital Badge programme participants had to review and re-organise an aspect of their own work with learners' e.g. teaching method or interaction with a group of learners, incorporating the principles of Universal Design for Learning (Rose & Meyer, 2014).

3.2.2 Best Practice UDL examples developed through the Digital Badge on UDL:

The group engaged with the Digital Badge on UDL found that the framework allowed them to stand back and discovered imaginative and practical ways to ensure the learners were fully included. This section gives some examples of suggested adaptations to lesson planning and how they worked.

UDL Principle 1 - Provide multiple means of engagement:

Case Study – Managing Staff

A college Director used the assignment as an opportunity to bring staff together to assess their preferences for upskilling on UDL and help address any key needs identified. The majority were concerned about applying UDL principles to their assessment methods.

Through a series of group sessions and presentations the Director worked with staff to help identify how best to apply a more UDL focused approach to assessments across all modules including moving to a wider class support plan instead of an individual support plan.

The Director provided teachers with a toolkit to help increase their interest and overall engagement in the objective. The work carried out, including the introduciton of staff and learner evaluations of the courses once all the changes were made, is ongoing as part of the college strategy to implement a college wide UDL position to learning.

Case Study – Teaching Art

An art teacher with a learner with ASD who was struggling with a core aspect of the Drawing module revised their approach to support learner learning after completing the course on UDL.

The teacher decided to take a more flexible approach to this module to allow for broader interpretation and experimentation from the class involving class exercises to enable learners to discuss and explore ideas about the module in a more open way.

"The individual classes revealed... from my observations and from learner feedback, the UDL objectives of the scheme, to be of benefit to all..."

UDL Principle 2 - Provide multiple means of representation

Case Study – Teaching Bookkeeping

A learner assessment revealed the majority of learners were finding the module on accounting software in their Bookkeeping course very difficult as they did not have access to the software at home to practice, and struggled to understand the steps during class time.

The teacher decided that she would create a video tutorial with her mobile phone going through the steps on the accountancy software for key tasks as part of the module.

"The feedback was superb. Learners were very positive in their reviews both literally and verbally. It helped learners to work at their own pace. They could pause the video, rewind it and watch it a second time to recap what they had done in class that day."

Case Study – Teaching Physiology

On review of a number of learner groups of a biology class, this teacher noticed that there was difficulty with terminology and parts of the assessments which involved diagrams.

The teacher introduced a video clip showing learners how to draw a diagram, and allowing learners to practice themselves. She produced a vocabulary list in advance for learners to access in advance of their class on their online Learning Management System (LMS) i.e. Moodle. To help support executive functioning and memory amongst her learners, the teacher explained the separate functions of each organelle in an animal cell by creating a story, assigning a character for each part of the cell e.g. The Lysosomes referred to as The Greenstar (Irish Waste Disposal company) as they disposed of the waste as their primary function.

"...the outcome was very positive...a plan is in place"

Case Study - Learner Support Services

One learning support tutor who provides Assistive Technology support and general learner supports reviewed key elements of his work to make it more accessible to learners. Three key areas he revised were the study clinic (where he provides one-to-one support to learners struggling with their assignments), workshops (one key learner support tools and skills) and an online learner toolkit (a resource with key tips and supports for learners navigating the learning environment).

In relation to the study clinic, the tutor decided to provide an extra session during the week to allow more opportunities for learners to discuss any issues they're having with their assignments. He also designed a poster outlining what the study clinic was, how learners can attend and key preparatory questions to help the tutor support them with their assignments as part of the session.

This work is still ongoing.

Figure 13 Jim Kelleher, St. John's College, video submission for the Digital Badge on UDL

Case Study – Teaching Law

Following an evaluation of her law module, a teacher found that learners were concerned about how the information was presented in class (on PowerPoint) and the lack of flexibility around reviewing the content outside of the class. Following this evaluation, the teacher decided to help engage learners she would alter the way she presented the information by providing the slides in advance of each class, condensing the information on the slides and incorporating more visual options to support the learners' learning.

"Even though most of these [learners] did not have any certifiable disability, many of them found it difficult to read small text and this change improved their experience. Getting the notes in advance of class allowed those who felt they needed it the time to get their heads around the subject matter and consequently allowed them to engage better in class… The feedback I got from learners regarding this [change] was very positive and they engaged well with the content of the lessons"

Case Study - Teaching Health Promotion

Following an evaluation of their Health Promotion course, this teacher found that there was a diverse range of learning outcomes to be covered and that the broad range of students involved in her course might benefit from alternative means of illustrating their understanding of the module. The teacher organised a health promotion week on campus which the students would run as part of their assessment. Teachers and students in the college were asked what elements of health promotion they'd like to know more about which informed the topics covered as part of the week. To encourage students to take ownership of the promotion week, the teacher decided that students on the course could apply for leadership roles to organise part of the event. The teacher also incorporated multiple means for students to communicate and express themselves including Whatsapp groups, Moodle and group activities. The teacher also organised guest speakers, visits to relevant facilities and used videos to support their learning. A week long schedule of topics was run in the college, led by the students to promote various elements of health promotion, including physical education, nutrition, mental health and ESOL.

"Feedback from students on completion of the Heath Promotion module was extremely positive... Choice empowered them and ultimately provided them with a sense of belonging and inclusivity".

Figure 14 Helena Farrell drawing on the floor as part of health promotion campaign for her digital badge submission

UDL Principle 3 - Provide multiple means of action and expression

Case Study - Teaching Interculturalism

A teacher who focused on their intercultural class found that the learners struggled with the written report assignment as this was achieved predominantly through their second language (ESOL learners) and therefore presented a barrier for them to illustrate their understanding.

The teacher decided to incorporate a learner-led cultural event, where learners had an opportunity to socialise and to showcase their culture to other learners. The learners determined how to run the event and what activities to hold and this enabled them to demonstrate their learning through the presentations and information stands which formed part of their assessment.

Learner feedback from this assessment was that the event had a very positive impact on them and their sense of engagement on the course and with the college. They also stated that they enjoyed the day and were satisfied that the assessment method allowed them to both understand and demonstrate that they had achieved the learning outcome.

Self-Reflection

As part of the assignment participants provided their own reflection on the process which gave insight into the impact of adapting a more UDL approach had on their professional practice;

"Learners became more engaged and left with a deeper understanding of the course content."

"I admit when I thought about the work involved in redesigning elements of a module I slightly dreaded the prospect. It was the middle of a busy academic year and every moment was precious. However, I am pleased to say I was surprised by how easy it was to implement Universal Design for Learning strategies in the module. I also really enjoyed the way it challenged me to be creative and to think of new ways of presenting material, engaging the learners, and assessment styles. "

"Having become aware of UDL, I have recently found myself needing to question my initial interpretation and impulsive reaction... Such incidents can be challenging, but they point to what I consider the main point from my self-reflection, teachers need to be open and willing to change... teachers need to be aware that their own position is not a neutral norm, and they must become more open, committed and willing to change."

"

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of implementing UDL was the impact it had on the learners. By adopting a Universal Design for Learning approach I not only improved learning outcomes for my learners with disabilities but it had a marked impact on all of the learners.

- Digital Badge participant on how the assignment impacted both their perspective and their learners

04 Pilot Outcomes

There was a unanimous view expressed by the group that the network has changed their mindsets. Individuals are more aware of their own biases as teachers and that not all learners share the same values and norms. The network learning enabled individuals to broaden their views of disability, and has has given them a deeper understanding of the value of difference and learner's rights. Furthermore, reflections on their own experiences changed their thinking about inclusion and the social construction of disability has changed their approach to their teaching practice. A repository of inclusive practice and ideas was created and now functions as an initial resource for the group and wider CETB. The group have become early adopters of UDL within CETB.

— **Upskilled: The spotlight seminars, which had full attendance, were well received, as were the network opportunities by members of the group.**

Training Received	Outcome
Universal Design Training	Provide an understanding of the importance of accessible publications, space and presentations to create an inclusive learning environment.
UDL Training	Review teaching methodologies in line with Universal Design for Learning principles to accommodate a diverse learner body as part of the main teaching module with positive results.
Needs Assessment	Provide information on best practice in relation to processing a Needs Assessment (including advisement on post-assessment data processing in line with data protection legislation) and samples of layouts which could be useful.
Assistive Technology	Provide knowledge of applications and accommodations for supporting learners with a disability or specific learning difficulty.
Executive Functioning	Provide information on the additional soft skills e.g. time management, strategising which are salient for learning and highlight key resources to reinforce their executive function as part of the main curricula.
Strategies and risk assessment for supporting learners with a mental health difficulty	Build capacity to assist learners with a mental health difficulty effectively while having a better understanding of the boundaries involved and procedures on how to work within them.

— Completion of The Digital Badge on UDL and certification.

— Changed viewpoint on inclusion: "One size does not fit all" is a good way to frame the changing attitudes of participants towards disability. The pilot they believe enabled them to come to a deeper and fuller understanding of inclusion, and develop greater confidence in how they can be inclusive within their own learning environment.

— Online collaboration: AHEAD created a Google Drive Folder which was shared with all members of the network as an online platform to share information about meetings, examples of good practice and teaching methodologies following recommendations from the first network meeting. The group also mentioned that they would set up a folder on the CETB Sharepoint in order to create a more centralised online platform for information sharing within the group.

— Policies and procedures: A list of proposed policies for supporting learners with disabilities and specific learning difficulties in further education in Cork Education and Training Board by The Active Inclusion Expert Group (see appendix section 7.4).

05 Recommendations for the future (CETB)

1   Review the role of staff designated to manage disability supports and accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure that their work is standardised, quality assured and legally compliant across the ETB with equality, disability and data protection legislation.

2   Explore, through engagement with SOLAS and the Department of Education and Skills, as part of a sector wide initiative, the formal recognition of, and resourcing for, an appropriately staffed Disability Support Service within the CETB (and all ETBs) to provide the necessary supports for learners with disabilities and different learning needs.

3   Cork ETB to organise and host a Spotlight Seminar/conference in 2018 to share the work and good practices of the AIN pilot thus far.

4   To continue to support The Active Inclusion Network: In collaboration with AHEAD, CETB will continue the work of The AIN to disseminate the model throughout CETB to support students with disabilities including mental health difficulties.

5   Ensure that the Professional Development Lead and Co-ordinator appointed as part of The SOLAS Professional Development Strategy (2017-2019) have responsibility for upskilling professional staff on Universal Design for Learning and for developing inclusive practice for diversity of learners in FET.

6   Make available and disseminate The Digital Badge in UDL to staff across the ETB on The UDL Framework as a way to upskill staff on diversity.

7   Promote and train authenticators in the centres across the sector about UDL and learner centred assessment strategies.

8   The Director of Further Education and Training to map the current support and resources available to support those working in Further Education and Training within The CETB currently.

9   To work collaboratively with the quality assurance team on policies and procedures for creating a standardised and cohesive approach to inclusive practice across the whole Further Education and Training sector in Cork ETB.

10   Monitor the participation rates of learners with disabilities on a regular basis to assist colleges to strategically increase the capacity and infrastructure of the sector to provide appropriate supports to all future learners with disabilities. This research can also provide information on future trends in relation to learners with disabilities in further education within CETB.

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07 Appendix

AHEAD CONFERENCE CONVERSATION CORNER NOTES: SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION SECTOR (2017)

AHEAD held a series of discussion corners at their 2017 Conference. This was in response to requests from participants working within the FET sector who expressed the unanimous view that there was little opportunity for their voice to be heard. AHEAD agreed to host a conversation corner for 50 minutes and to report the discussion back to the ETBI.

Topic: Supports for learners with disabilities in the FE sector

Areas of concern highlighted

— There are excellent practices across the ETBs for a diversity of learners but in relation to learners with disabilities the support services available to them is inconsistent and ad-hoc and often the good practices are not very visible to others.

— The infrastructure could be improved if it is to assure the quality of learning experience of learners with disabilities and to ensure they have the same opportunities to take part as other learners. (Supporting learners with disabilities was described as building a snowman in a desert, bound to not last).

— The Disability Officer role is the Agent for Active Inclusion in the college but the hours allocated to this role are inconsistent and across the country appears unrelated to the number of learners or type of disability.

— There is great inconsistency of understanding within and across ETBs of WHAT the role of Disability Officer is. What are the functions of the role and what are the essential tasks to be carried out?
— The absence of a national evidence base of the numbers of learners with disability in FE nor of the type of disability or the complexity of the support requirements.
— The rigidity of assessment criteria of many of the QQI/QQI awards. .
— The lack of additional funding for other areas of FET such as youth reach or adult learning or community courses.
— The lack of guidance for staff on how to deal with issues such as incapacity to do a course, diagnosis of disability, mental health, Asperger's syndrome and learners with autism.
— Teachers are being judged on the achievement of awards and not on the achievement of individual learners and their learning journey.
— In accessibility of CPD for staff with this designated role is very limited and difficult to gain permission to attend.
— The absence of available funding for diagnostic assessments where learners have no clinical diagnosis.

What is required?

Short term:
Staff were unanimous that amongst them they have valuable experience and would find opportunities to share their expertise and ideas invaluable. A network of support for Disability Officers would enable them to learn from each other and share practice. Each ETB could provide structured opportunities for Disability Officers to meet and to share information about their work. Also such a network would provide opportunities for Disability Officers to support each

other within the context of their work, to tease out problems collectively and ensure systems are in place for compliance with legislation.

A Disability Officers Network could be supported by AHEAD and meet twice per year to explore a specific theme pertinent to their work, such as mental health. This network could be responsible for the development of customised guidelines on inclusion. This would need permission from within the sector and recognition of the group.

Each ETB could join the membership of AHEAD giving access to specific disability information and advice to all staff and gain access to events and information via the website. AHEAD would be willing to co-ordinate the network on an ETB and National basis.

National longer term goals

1   SOLAS to set up a standardised approach to data gathering within each ETB and throughout the sector and gather this data for analysis on an annual basis. This would provide a baseline of evidence for comparison to assess progress and inform developments.
2   SOLAS to commission research into the participation of learners with disabilities in FET, the type of disability, the supports available and the subjects being studied as well as the achievement of outcomes. It would include the voice of learners and identify their experiences and concerns. This research would provide an invaluable base-line for future progress and provide information to inform the development of service provision. Information on the experience of learners with disability in assessment could be a feedback channel to QQI on how to improve the assessment process for all learners.
3   Work towards establishing standardised procedures to assure the Quality of educational provision to learners with disabilities and to comply with current legislation. A baseline requirement would be to:
    a   Establish a system of Needs Assessment to identify the Reasonable Accommodations for learners with disability
    b   Provide training to ETBs on inclusive pedagogic practice and how to create an inclusive classroom
    c   Move towards a model of Universal Design for inclusion

The UN Convention on Human Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is about to be ratified this year by Ireland and it will place responsibilities on all state institutions to raise awareness and to take measures to promote the full realisation of the rights of people with disabilities. Article 7 specifically outlines the importance of research into what factors create a Universally Designed environment and Article 27 specifically lays out the responsibilities of the state in relation to work:

Article 27 Work and employment

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

The **Disability Act 2005** places statutory obligations on public bodies to:

1   Make buildings accessible
2   To make services and information accessible , this applies to websites and all materials
3   Be proactive in employing people with disabilities

It provides for:

—   Individual assessment of need and related service statements
—   Sectoral plans in key service areas

7.2 NETWORK OUTPUTS: Participation questionnaire template of learners with disabilities in Further Education

1   Details of institution and respondent
   A   Name of college
   B   Name of respondent
   C   Position of respondent
2   General institution admissions
   A   Total number of learners registered with the institution
   B   Total number of full time undergraduate learners registered with the institution
   C   Total number of full time postgraduate learners registered with the institution
   D   Total number of part time undergraduate learners registered with the institution
   E   Total number of part time postgraduate learners registered with the institution
3   Disability/access service
   A   Total number of learners with a disability registered with the Disability/ Access Service
   B   Total number of full time undergraduate learners with a disability registered with the Disability/Access Service
   C   Total number of full time postgraduate learners with a disability registered with the Disability/Access Service
   D   Total number of part time undergraduate learners with a disability registered with the Disability/Access Service
   E   Total number of part time postgraduate learners with a disability registered with the Disability/Access Service
4   Undergraduates
   A   Total number of undergraduate learners with a disability registered with the Disability/Access Service.

Please provide the breakdown for each disability category below.

B   Breakdown by primary disability
– Asperger's syndrome/autism
– ADD/ADHD
– Blind/visually impaired
– Deaf/hearing impaired
– DCD - dyspraxia/dysgraphia
– Mental health condition
– Neurological conditions/speech and language disabilities
– Significant ongoing illness
– Physical disability
– Specific Learning Difficulties (dyslexia/dyscalculia)
– Other

5   New entrant undergraduates

A   Total number of new entrant undergraduate learners (1st year of undergrad study) with a disability registered with the Disability/Access Service

B   Breakdown of total new entrants (A) by primary disability
– Asperger's syndrome/autism
– ADD/ADHD
– Blind/visually impaired
– Deaf/hearing impaired
– DCD - dyspraxia/dysgraphia
– Mental health condition
– Neurological conditions/speech and language disabilities
– Significant ongoing illness
– Physical disability
– Specific Learning Difficulties (dyslexia/dyscalculia)
– Other

6   New entrant drop-out rates

   A   Of the new entrants with a disability registered with the Disability/ Access Service (listed in above in Q6A), how many exited the college (dropped out) before the end of the academic year?

   B   Breakdown by primary disability

- Asperger's syndrome/autism
- ADD/ADHD
- Blind/visually impaired
- Deaf/hearing impaired
- DCD - dyspraxia/dysgraphia
- Mental health condition
- Neurological conditions/speech and language disabilities
- Significant ongoing illness
- Physical disability
- Specific Learning Difficulties (dyslexia/dyscalculia)
- Other

7   Exam accommodations

   A   Total number of learners with a disability registered with the Disability/ Access Service who received exam accommodations in the academic year 2016/17

   B   Breakdown by Primary Disability

- Asperger's syndrome/autism
- ADD/ADHD
- Blind/visually impaired
- Deaf/hearing impaired
- DCD - dyspraxia/dysgraphia
- Mental health condition
- Neurological conditions/speech and language disabilities
- Significant ongoing illness
- Physical disability
- Specific Learning Difficulties (dyslexia/dyscalculia)
- Other

Comment:

   C   Total number of learners with a disability registered with the Disability/Access Service who received extra time during exams as an accommodation

D   Breakdown
- Extra 10 minutes per hour
- Extra 15 minutes per hour
- Extra 20 minutes per hour
- More than 20 extra minutes per hour

E   Total number of learners with a disability registered with the Disability/ Access Service who took their exam in an alternative venue as an accommodation

F   Breakdown
- Individual test centre - general
- Large or low distraction venue
- Other alternative venue

G   Total Number of Learners with a disability registered with the Disability/Access Service who received the each of the following exam accommodations (if a learner uses more than 1, count them in both boxes):

Breakdown

H   Use of computer
- Reader - Invigilator to help read paper
- Scribe
- Enlarged paper
- Use of sticker or tip sheet to refer examiners to marking guidelines for learners with a Specific Learning Difficulty or who are Deaf or hard of hearing
- Paper in Braille or electronic format

7.3 NETWORK OUTPUTS: DISABILITY SUPPORT ON THE GROUND

When we asked each college for details on the staff numbers and hours involved supporting learners with disability services we received information on how disability support is managed differently within each college as illustrated below;

College	Staff involved in Disability Support
Cork College of Commerce	– 1 Disability Officer (part of full time hours).
Kinsale College	– The Director of the college works with the learners with disabilities and assigns each one to Learning Support as required. – We currently do not have a designated Disability Support Officer. Learning Support teachers also help with the administration side of disability support.
Colaiste Stiofan Niofa	– The Disability Officer is allocated hours to complete their work. – They are not employed "full time" but rather have to complete perhaps 15 hours a week teaching as well as facilitate those registered with the Disability office. – The number of hours allocated for Disability varies per college but might be as few as 7-8 hours a week. – There is only one Disability Officer per college.
St. John College	– Position is an A-Post and 6 hours is allocated.
Mallow College	– I undertook the role of disability support because no one else was doing it. I do not have a post for it. – I do it where I can fit it in between guidance counselling and teaching classes.

7.4   DISCUSSION EXERCISE

The following discussion paper was drafted in consideration of AHEAD research and the current support policies and procedures in use at higher and further level including those in Killester College, Waterford IT and Galway-Mayo IT.

Support policies and procedures for learners with disabilities or learning difficulties

The following are draft policies and procedures to support learners with disabilities in Further Education and Training based on best practice guidelines and policies elsewhere. This is to facilitate a group discussion on how such policies and procedures might work within the colleges involved in The Cork Active Inclusion Expert Group in supporting learners with disabilities and learning disabilities.

1   Access and admission policy
2   Needs Assessment policy
3   Exam accommodations
4   Data protection policy regarding learner support
5   Complaints procedure for learners with disabilities

*Fitness to practice policy [was covered as part of presentation on risk assessment]

To support implementation of any learner support policy it is important that the following guidelines are followed (AHEAD, 2008):

–   The College is committed to ensuring, as far as possible and within the framework of current legislative requirements, that learners with disabilities have equality of access to and participation in all aspects of college life.
–   Develop and maintain links and partnerships with other departments and functions.

- Evaluation process in place: monitor and evaluate the service on an ongoing basis.
- College website acts as a resource outlining relevant information such as staff contact details and supports available.
- The disability support staff have access to a private space to conduct learner interviews or meetings.
- Use a database to monitor and track learners and their use of supports.
- Log all information - referral information, assessment and further development of supports for each learner linked in with the disability services to avoid possible overlap with different support staff.
- Ensure all materials which are a resource tool for learners using the disability support services are in an accessible format.
- Make appointments available to learners availing of supports.
- Promote the service and raise awareness through promotional material e.g. poster campaigns and training throughout the academic year.

1.1 Access and admission policy relating to supports

At the core of the admissions policy is the principle that the college provides equal and universal opportunities for all prospective learners.

Any incoming learner with a disability or learning support need which might impact their learner experience in the college are encouraged to provide evidence of their disability and any relevant information as part of their application to ensure that supports are in place during their studies in the college. All sensitive information provided as part of the admissions process is treated confidentially in line with data protection protocol.

To help the college best support all learners, all applicants will be asked to provide a contact person and their contact details which the college will only use if there is grounds for reasonable concern.

The learner will be asked to give permission for information about their support requirements to be shared with staff who will require it in order to support the learner.

2.1 Needs Assessment policy

In the case when a learner has disclosed a diagnosed disability or learning support need which they believe will impact them from learning or participating to their full ability in the college, a named disability liaison staff member will carry out a Needs Assessment with the learner. The college will make every effort to accommodate the needs of the learners in line with the resources available.

The Needs Assessment process will determine the learning support needs in relation to the following main components;

– The course demands: What are the skills and competencies to be acquired and how does this impact the learner.
– The impact of the learner impairment in relation to the environment and the course demands.
– The identification of learner needs: What supports or accommodations are required for the learner.
– An assessment report will be written up by the Disability Liaison in the college with the learner.
– An individual support plan (IEP) will be drafted and agreed and forwarded appropriately to relevant staff. The plan will be reviewed by the disability staff liaison and the learner later in the academic year. The disclosure of the learner's disability to relevant staff members will be at the discretion of the learner however the IEP can be shared with staff with the agreement of the learner.

2.2 Exam accommodations

As part of a learner's Needs Assessment, there may be accommodations required in examinations depending on the impact of the disability. Exam

accommodations may include an alternative examination venue, time allowances or access to a computer to provide an alternative format to access the exam papers (e.g. to use computer reading software).

All exam accommodations for the learner should be in consultation with the department, the disability liaison staff member and the learner.

*Please note that the college strive to implement a UDL approach, where it will aim to provide a multifaceted approach to their teaching and administrative practices which will support all learners as part within the mainstream teaching environment.

3.1 Data protection policy for any learners registered with a disability or learning support need

Some personal data of learners will be processed by the college as part of a college record during their studies. Any personal information held by the college is treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality in accordance with data protection legislation. Any sensitive information on a learner will be shared with other members of staff as permitted by the learner or as required when seeking relevant funding for support (e.g. learning support needs).

Below are examples of when the college may share information about a learner with staff or to third parties where we have a legitimate reason in connection with the course.

The College may share your relevant personal data with bodies including the following:

– Higher Education Authority (HEA)* - please refer to the HEA collection notice below
– Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
– Learner Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) for grant eligibility purposes
– Department of Social Protection to verify employment status and eligibility for allowances

- Revenue Commissioners
- Professional and regulatory bodies where programmes are accredited by such bodies
- Work placement providers
- Employers where learners are studying as an apprentice
- Other higher education institutions, partners or research organisations to which a learner transfers or pursues an exchange programme or where a learner's programme is being run collaboratively
- Software providers or service providers performing administrative functions on behalf of the college (e.g. IT services, clinical tools, carpark management, etc.)
- Learners' Union to facilitate learner elections
- External examiners
- Direct mail agencies/printing companies to facilitate the delivery of mailshots
- Plagiarism detection service providers (e.g. Turnitin) to ensure academic standards
- Potential employers/recruitment companies for verification of qualifications
- Irish Survey of Learner Engagement (ISSE)
- Insurance companies in respect of accidents occurring within the Institute
- Institute legal advisors
- An Garda Síochána to assist in the prevention or detection of crime
- Auditors

This is not an exhaustive list and any other disclosures to third parties not listed here are made only where there is legitimate reason to do so and in accordance with the law.

Parents, guardians and other relatives

The College will not disclose a learner's data to a relative or next of kin without prior consent from the learner, other than in exceptional circumstances i.e. where there is potential danger/risk to the health or well-being of a learner. In these exceptional circumstances, the college will first look to get consent from the learner to discuss matters relating to

concerns for the learner with the relative or next of kin unless direct contact with the learner is not possible or following several unsuccessful attempts to contact the learner.

4.1 Exit procedure

If a learner, registered with a disability or specific learning difficulty requests to leave their studies before the end of their programme, the disability liaison in the college should be informed of this request and arrange a meeting to discuss with the learner their reasons for leaving. This is to help identify any potential gaps in supports they might have need to continue with their studies if they were comfortable with this option or informing future learner support policy in identifying possible areas which might be an issue for other learners with disabilities.

5.1 Complaints procedure for learners with a registered disability

The college is committed to providing a high standard of competency, professionalism and fairness for all learners. On the occasion when there is a failure of the college system, support processes or sub-standard performance occurs on a specific occasion there is a complaints procedure to ensure high quality supports for learners with a registered disability in the college.

In accordance with The Disability Act 2005 which places a statutory obligation on public service providers to support access to services and facilities for people with disabilities. Under the Act, people with disabilities are entitled to:

– Have their health and educational needs assessed.
– Have individual service statements drawn up, setting out what services they should get.
– Access independent complaints and appeals procedures.
– Access public buildings and public service employment.
– The Act also provides for restrictions on genetic testing.

For further information please see https://www.ahead.ie/disabilityact

If a learner who is registered with a disability or specific learning difficulty in the college has a particular grievance in relation to the support they feel they may or may not be receiving in college they can first go to report their issues as follows:

5.2 Informal complaints procedure

Learners who wish to make a complaint about the disability support services in the college should first report the issue to the designated disability support person to see if they can help resolve the issue for them. Otherwise a learner can report their grievance to the College Director/Principal regarding their own disability support.

6.3 Formal complaints procedure

A learner can raise a formal complaint to the College Director/Principal in the form of a letter outlining the method in which they have already tried to seek an informal procedure to resolve the issue in relation to their disability support in the college. The College Director/Principal must respond to the learner with a potential resolution in 20 days.

If the College Director/Principal is unable to resolve the grievance for the learner regarding their disability support in the college they can raise the issue to The Quality Assurance Services for the Further Education and Training Sector in Cork Education and Training Board.

THE ACTIVE INCLUSION NETWORK

Cork Education and Training Board
Pilot Project for Staff Development

August 2018

ahead
Association for Higher Education Access & Disability

cetb
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*Cork Education and
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