

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2016-2020



October 2016

“Equality is the public recognition, effectively expressed in institutions and manners, of the principle that an equal degree of attention is due to the needs of all human beings.”

Simone Weil
French Philosopher
1909 – 1943

CONTENTS

No	Content	Page
1	Foreword	4
2	Introduction	6
3	Consultation	7
4	Internal & reporting arrangements How the plan will be published	8
5	Review of previous plan Key achievements	8
6	QUB Inclusive Employment Scheme	11-13
7	Proposed action measures	14-23
8	Contact details Alternative formats	24
10	Useful links	25-26

Foreword

For many years supporting staff and students with disabilities at Queen's University has been a key priority.

This plan reflects our ongoing commitment to ensuring Queen's remains a safe, welcoming and supportive environment for staff and students with disabilities.

It sets out our planned activities for the next five years which will be a challenging period of reform and change in line with Vision 2020.



Supporting staff and students with disabilities – whether by providing easy access to many of our new and refurbished buildings, providing information, training and advice or helping develop peoples' skills and confidence through programmes such as our "Inclusive Employment Scheme" - is all part of the process of ensuring that we provide a modern, accessible and rewarding environment for people.

This plan has been developed following engagement and consultation with our own Disability Forum which represents the best interests of staff and students with disabilities in Queen's.

Such a partnership approach is in keeping with the Equality Commission's guidelines which state that if it is carried out effectively, can help pool resources and maximise the impact of measures – something which is even more important in a period of financial constraint and scrutiny.

However, the effective delivery of this plan is a collective responsibility. It is not something "for others to do". Each of us needs to embrace it and demonstrate how we will achieve the range of measures we have agreed on delivering.

By doing so, we will demonstrate that Queen's University Belfast, a world class international institution, is committed to providing a welcoming, safe and rewarding environment for those with disabilities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S McGuickin', written in a cursive style.

Sean McGuickin
Director of Human Resources



"I was very nervous about starting university. Being a wheelchair user, I was apprehensive about getting around campus and being accepted because of my disability. However, I soon realised there was nothing to worry about. Queen's has been excellent in helping me settle into university life."

Carla Higgins
QUB Law Graduate
Markethill, Co Armagh

Introduction

A disability is defined as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, the University is required, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life (“the disability duties”).

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the University is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions.

This plan reflects our ongoing commitment to ensuring Queen’s remains a safe, welcoming and supportive environment for staff and students with disabilities.

Objectives

The University is committed to effectively implementing the disability duties and this Plan.

The following objectives have been identified:

- 1. To mainstream the new disability duties (page 14).**
- 2. To encourage participation of persons with a disability in public life (pages 15-19).**
- 3. To promote positive attitudes towards disability (pages 20-21).**
- 4. To monitor and review progress (page 22).**
- 5. To provide training and raise awareness of the disability duties and issues (page 23).**

Resources

The University is committed to allocating all reasonable, additional resources (in terms of time, people and money) required to implement this plan and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

Support

Support – both internal and external - is available for students with disabilities.

[Please click here](#) if you are interested in learning more about the Queen's University Student Support Fund Framework.

This University fund can be used to provide financial help to students whose access to higher education might be inhibited by financial considerations, or who, for whatever reason, including experience of a disability or long term condition, face financial difficulties in meeting their living costs.

Further information on student support, including other forms of assistance, can be accessed by visiting [the Student Guidance Centre website](#).

[Please click here](#) if you require further – more general - information about financial support available for higher education students in Northern Ireland. This link contains fact sheets, video guides, presentations and [frequently asked questions](#).

Consultation

The University is committed to ensuring meaningful and effective public involvement and participation and is committed to supporting the sustained engagement of hard to reach groups and individuals in taking forward this plan.

As such it will continue to engage and consult with a wide range of key stakeholders including disabled students, staff and their representatives.

The University will seek to ensure that those with disabilities and their representative bodies, both internally and externally, are involved when implementing, delivering and reviewing the plan.

Internal and reporting arrangements

The University will put appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and the plan is successfully implemented.

The Head of the Equality and Diversity Unit will have operational responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the plan and will update the Disability Forum on progress every 3 months.

Annual Progress Reports on the Disability Action Plan will be presented to the University Operating Board and once approved, submitted to the Equality Commission. At this stage, new performance indicators and positive action measures may be added to the Disability Action Plan.

The University will also carry out a five yearly review of this plan and/or the Annual Progress Reports submitted to the Equality Commission. This will ensure the alignment of Section 75 and disability duties.

Communication



The University will seek to ensure effective communication of the plan to staff and students and will provide access to appropriate information, training and guidance.

The Equality and Diversity Unit will develop a Communications Plan which will set out how it seeks to use a variety of channels to effectively communicate this plan and associated guidance to staff, students and beyond.

How the plan will be published

After the Disability Action Plan is formally submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland it will be placed on the Queen's University website (www.qub.ac.uk) and circulated electronically to all staff.

It will also be made available in different formats from the University's Equality and Diversity Unit (see page 24 for contact details) and be disseminated to key external stakeholders through a variety of communication channels.

Review of previous plan & key achievements

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the University has undertaken a number of previous measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage their participation in public life.

The University's Section 75 Annual Progress Report details some of the achievements regarding the implementing of the previous Disability Action Plan (2010-2012).

There are many examples of imaginative good practice in existence around the University, some of which are outlined below.

- **Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people**
 - Queen's University Disability Forum (meets quarterly);
 - Queen's University Inclusive Employment Scheme (see pages 11-13);
 - Section 75 Action Based Plan;
 - Diversity Now Online Training package for Queen's University Staff (mandatory for all staff); and
 - Progressive workplace policies.

- **Encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life**
 - Queen's University Disability Forum;
 - QUB Inclusive Employment Scheme (see below);
 - Section 75 Action Based Plan;
 - Diversity Now Online Training package for QUB Staff (mandatory for all staff and being rolled out to students);
 - Progressive workplace policies;
 - Advocacy services including [Queen's University Disability Services](#) who help students arrange support within their chosen course and the wider University community;
 - [Queen's University Disability Advisors](#) who can help students arrange support packages based on assessed needs and designed according to the requirements of their particular course of study and the resources available. They are responsible for promoting disability awareness among staff within their own school; providing advice and support to students within their school who may be experiencing academic difficulties as a result of their disability and referring students to other support services within the University; and

- Providing access to a Disability Support Fund which allows QUB staff (who have disclosed their disability) to apply for funding to purchase various pieces of equipment to assist them when carrying out their work.

Over the last 2 years, the University's Equality and Diversity Unit has received 18 applications for support.

Over three quarters of these have been supported through financial assistance from the **Disability Support Fund** (*staff can also apply to their Schools for such assistance*) which helped pay for a range of equipment and support such as:

- larger monitors
- voice recognition software
- specialist chairs
- specialist keyboards
- height adjustable desks
- solid state hard drive
- digital pocket memo
- specialist eye tests
- mac book
- mobility scooter
- link receiver and
- a transmitter set.

Queen's University Belfast Inclusive Employment Scheme



The Queen's University "Inclusive Employment Scheme" ("the scheme") was launched by the then Minister for Employment and Learning Dr Stephen Farry on 29 May 2014.

The scheme is currently supported by the Department for Communities (previously the Department for Employment and Learning) and affords disabled people with a placement in various schools and directorates throughout the University.

The scheme is a great opportunity for those who have been unable to get work, or have had to leave work because of a disability, to develop skills and gain valuable work experience. It has been identified as an example of best practice by the Department of Employment and Learning and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

During 2016 the scheme involved Queen's staff working closely alongside organisations such as Disability Action, Triangle Housing Association, the Cedar Foundation and Ulster Supported Employment Limited ("USEL") to offer placements to participants.

In previous years, the University has worked with Action Mental Health and The Orchardville Society.

Feedback from University staff, support workers and participants in this year's scheme (2015-2016) has again been very positive:

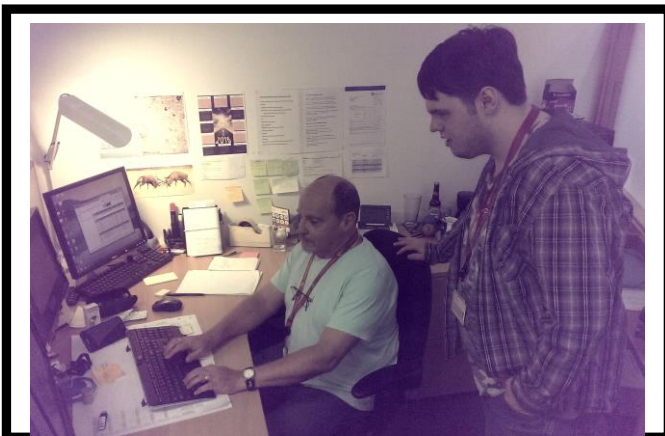
- ***"I will be disappointed when it ends but I am much more confident in my abilities now and less scared of the world of work.."*** Carole Catling - placement in QUB Research and Enterprise Directorate.
- ***"I found the placement gave me a chance to meet new people, develop new skills and be creative by allowing me to bring my own ideas to the role."*** Benjamin Kinnear – placement in QUB Telecommunications (switchboard office).
- ***"I have loved being in three different areas meeting lots of staff within Queen's. Thank you for letting me be part of the work placement experience."*** Grace Hamilton – placement in 3 different Human Resources functions.



QUB Employment Inclusive Employment Scheme participants, support workers and Queen's staff at a lunchtime event in the Senate Room on 14 June 2016

- ***“Karl and William came to us in January 2016 under the Inclusive Employment Scheme. Both are on different points of the Autism Spectrum. Both are graduates in Computer Science.***

Karl and William have been able to put their hand to anything which has been asked of them without complaint. We have been impressed with their ability in completing various tasks.



QUB IT Service Desk Technician and Inclusive Employment Scheme Mentor Millar Neill with his two placement students, Karl McKay-Ritchie and William Seaton

I have seen their social skills improve greatly over the past 6 months in their interactions with the team ...they both attend our team's monthly staff meeting which they have found very useful in being aware of what the whole team is doing and helping them to feel very much a part of the team.

Karl and William's personal development has also increased with their participation in acquiring the ECDL qualification. They have applied themselves very well to this and are attaining excellent results in the tests. Millar Neill (QUB IT Service Desk Technician, Information Services Directorate).

Further positive feedback has been received from Terry Parks, Head of the Disability Employment Service in the Department for the Communities who referred to the Queen's University Inclusive Employment Scheme as:

"....a great example of partnership working between a government body, the local disability sector and a major employer, who in this instance, just happen one of our most prestigious education establishments" adding that ***"the staff at Queen's, through their HR team and the respective schools throughout the university, have provided the opportunities and in-work support that will really enhance the employment prospects of many disabled people - and for that, we are all very grateful."***

For further insight into the Queen's University Inclusive Employment Scheme, please click on the testimonies provided by previous scheme participants [Jamie Davison](#) and [Suzie Leech](#).

Proposed Action Measures

Objective 1: To mainstream the new disability duties

MEASURE: Mainstream the disability duties into all decisions and activities			
<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
1.	Consult on proposed changes to relevant policies and procedures to obtain the views and comments of sector groups and staff with a disability.	Ongoing	Head of Equality and Diversity and relevant Senior Managers
2.	As a result of any consultation process, develop appropriate action measures based on the feedback received from disabled staff and senior managers.	Ongoing	Head of Equality and Diversity and relevant Senior Managers
3.	Provide an Annual Progress Report to the University Operating Board, Standing Committee and subsequently to the Equality Commission on the actions taken under this plan.	Annually from November 2017	Head of Equality and Diversity

Objective 2: To encourage participation of persons with a disability in public life

MEASURE: Increase the representation of persons with a disability amongst staff			
<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
1	Include a specific welcoming statement encouraging persons with a disability to apply for roles where there is an identified issue of under-representation.	Ongoing	Head of Equality and Diversity and relevant Senior Managers
2	Continue to provide applicants with an opportunity to indicate any reasonable adjustments which may be required to assist them during the recruitment process.	Ongoing	Personnel Manager and relevant Senior Managers
3	Conduct a survey of all staff with a disability to determine what further support may be required to facilitate their working at the University.	Annually from November 2017	Head of Equality and Diversity and relevant Senior Managers
4	Continue to provide support for staff via the Disability Support Fund, ensuring its availability and terms of use/support is appropriately communicated to staff.	Ongoing	Head of Equality and Diversity and relevant Senior Managers
5	Annually review necessary reasonable adjustments required to retain staff who develop a disability during the course of their employment.	Annually in January	Head of Equality and Diversity and relevant Senior Managers
6	Maintain and further develop the QUB Inclusive Employment Scheme for people with a disability in conjunction with the Department for Communities (DfC) and appropriate support groups.	Ongoing	Head of Equality and Diversity, DfC and relevant Senior Managers

7	Support and deliver outreach initiatives, involving external stakeholders where appropriate, aimed at supporting those with a disability.	Ongoing	Head of Equality and Diversity, Personnel Manager and relevant Senior Managers
8	Work alongside the University's Occupational Health Physician to annually review the nature of staff related cases being dealt with by Carecall and amend support services available to staff to address ongoing key problems.	Annually	Head of Equality and Diversity and Occupational Health Physician

MEASURE Increase the representation of persons with a disability on Senate and its Core Committees			
<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
9	Review the composition of Senate and its Core Committees with the Registrar's Office ensuring representation of people with a disability and to take appropriate action to address any emerging issues.	May 2018	Registrar's Office and Head of Equality and Diversity
10	Include a welcoming statement in all advertisements and promotional materials encouraging those with a disability to apply/stand for membership of Senate and University Core Committees guaranteeing that all necessary reasonable adjustments will be provided.	December 2017	Registrar's Office
11	Circulate a copy of all advertisements/election notices on the reconstitution of Senate to the University Disability Forum (internal elections) and disability interest groups (external appointments).	December 2017	Registrar's Office
12	Encourage members of staff with a disability to apply for membership of committees, consultative groups and working groups where appropriate.	Annually in December	Head of Equality and Diversity and relevant Senior Managers

13	Encourage students with a disability to be School representatives including School level Student and Staff Consultative Committees and Academic Board representatives.	Ongoing	Students' Union and Heads of School with assistance from Disability Services
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MEASURE Increase the participation of students with a disability in Students' Union activities

<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
14	Include a welcoming statement in all advertisements and promotional material encouraging students with a disability to nominate themselves for elected positions, particularly elections to the Executive Management Committee, and positions within clubs and societies.	From February 2017	Head of Equality and Diversity and Students' Union
15	Ensure that reasonable adjustments are put in place for candidates with a disability during elections for sabbatical and non-sabbatical posts.	By February 2017	Students' Union

MEASURE Develop the University's Disability Forum

<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
16	Ensure representation of staff members and students with a disability on the University's Disability Forum.	Ongoing	Forum Chairperson

MEASURE Develop a Guide that will support staff, students and visitors with a disability to access the University and its facilities			
<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
17	Produce guidance on facilities for persons with a disability in consultation with staff and student representatives in Queen's and external bodies.	October 2017	Director of Estates and Head of Equality and Diversity

MEASURE Promote opportunities for students with a disability to be represented in the activities and functions of external organisations			
<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
18	Encourage and support students with a disability in making application for membership of external organisations.	Ongoing	Director of Student Plus

MEASURE Review Student Disability Policy			
<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
19	Review and revise the Student Disability Policy in light of past and best practice guidance offered by statutory bodies, student feedback and experience within the University and HE sector, referencing the Compact Scheme and participation in the Regional Initiative for a Special Application route for disabled applicants.	June 2017	Director of Academic and Student Affairs Head of Admissions and Access

MEASURE Provide positive experiences for students with a disability to engage with employability and skills development			
<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
20	To establish a Specialist Placement Group with representation from Careers and Disability Services and Schools which will report to Senior Managers and identify areas for further work; and to establish shared protocols and processes for sharing information appropriately.	June 2017	Careers Employability and Skills and Disability Services

Objective 3: To promote positive attitudes towards disability

MEASURE Review the University's Communications Strategy to encourage positive attitudes towards disability			
<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
1	Review a range of internal and external communication policies, practices and procedures to ensure that disability is portrayed positively and to identify opportunities to include positive images of disability in University publications, social media and on websites.	Ongoing	Director of MRCI Head of Equality and Diversity
2	Continue to promote a positive student experience for students with a disability or and support available through outreach and recruitment activity.	Ongoing	Director of ASA and Director of MRCI
3	Positively promote the profiles of staff and/or students with a disability demonstrating the contribution they are making to Queen's University.	Ongoing	Director of MRCI Head of Equality and Diversity

MEASURE Ensure accessibility of the University's website, publications, internal documents and information systems			
<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
4	Review the University's website to ensure it is in line with best practice across the sector, in terms of the standard of accessibility, and seek to adequately promote disability and inclusion.	February 2017	Director of IS and Director of MRCI
5	Ensure that all University publications and internal documentation shall be made available in alternative accessible formats upon request.	Ongoing	Director of MRCI Head of Equality and Diversity

MEASURE Ensure that suppliers and contractors are familiar with and supportive of the University's commitment to the disability duties			
<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
6	Ensure that the University's Terms and Conditions for Supplies, Works and Services requires suppliers and contractors to subscribe to the University's commitment to Equality and Diversity where appropriate.	Ongoing	Director of Finance

Objective 4: To monitor and review progress

MEASURE Monitor and report on the successful implementation of the University's Disability Action Plan			
<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
1	Monitor the number of persons with a disability in the University's workforce.	Annually	Head of Equality and Diversity
2	Monitor the number of applicants with a disability to vacancies at the University following implementation of the welcoming statement.	Annually	Head of Equality and Diversity
3	Survey the membership of Senate in relation to the number of persons with a disability prior to reconstitution (1 January 2018) and post reconstitution to assess the impact of the new welcoming statement.	October 2017 & October 2018	Head of Equality and Diversity and Registrar's Office
4	Report to the Standing Committee on an annual basis the progress on the Disability Action Plan.	Annually from November 2017	Director of Human Resources and Head of Equality and Diversity
5	Monitor the participation of students with a disability represented on School, Faculty and University committees, consultative groups and working groups.	Ongoing	Head of Equality and Diversity, Students' Union and Heads of School, Faculty Deans of Education and Academic Affairs
6	Seek student and staff feedback on an annual basis relating to disability support.	Annually from November 2017	Head of Equality and Diversity and Disability Services

Objective 5: To provide training and raise awareness on the disability duties and issues

MEASURE Increase staff awareness of the disability duties and matters relating to disability			
<u>Performance Indicators and Targets</u>		<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
1	Review the online Equality and Diversity training (DiversityNow) to ensure that it accurately addresses the disability duties and raises awareness of disability related issues.	Ongoing	Head of Equality and Diversity and Staff Training & Development Manager
2	Continue to deliver Equality and Diversity training to new staff and existing staff where applicable.	Ongoing	Head of Equality and Diversity and Staff Training & Development Manager
3	Review the requirement for specific training for Deaf Awareness, Start to Sign and SENDO in conjunction with DASA.	December 2017	Staff Training & Development Manager
4	Deliver specific training relating to disability awareness in the learning environment as part of the PGCHET.	Ongoing	Director of Academic and Student Affairs and Staff Training & Development Manager

Contact details

Contact details for this plan are as follows:

The Equality and Diversity Unit
Human Resources Directorate
Queen's University Belfast
Administration Building
Level 4
Belfast
BT7 1NN

Phone: 02890 973039

Email: eqdiv@qub.ac.uk

www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/EqualityandDiversityUnit

Twitter: @QUBEQualDiverse

Alternative formats

This document is available in alternative formats including

- Large font
- CD
- Braille
- Main minority ethnic languages
- DAISY
- Easy Read
- Electronic version

Please contact the University's Equality and Diversity Unit if you require the document in one of these formats.

Useful links

- Action Mental Health: www.amh.org.uk
Twitter: @amhni
Facebook: www.facebook.com/hashtag/TakingActionOnMentalHealth
Tel: 02891 828494
- Action on Hearing Loss: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/
Email: informationline@hearingloss.org.uk
Twitter: @hearinglossni
Facebook: www.facebook.com/actiononhearingloss
Tel: 080 8808 0123
- Attention Deficit Disorder NI (ADD-NI): www.addni.net/
Email: hello@addni.net
Facebook: www.facebook.com/addni.childrenscharity/
Tel: 028 9020 0110
- Autism NI: www.autismni.org/
Email: info@autismni.org
Twitter: @AutismNIPAPA
Facebook: www.facebook.com/AutismNI/
Tel: 028 9040 1729
- CareCall: <http://www.carecallwellbeing.com/>
Email: support@carecallwellbeing.com
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CarecallSupport>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/carecallsupport>
Tel: 0800 389 5362
- Carers Northern Ireland: www.carersuk.org/northernireland
Email: info@carersuk.org
Twitter: @CarersUK
Facebook: www.facebook.com/CarersNI/
Tel: 028 9043 9843
- Disability Action: www.disabilityaction.org
Email: hq@disabilityaction.org
Twitter: @disabilityni
Facebook: www.facebook.com/disabilityaction
Tel: 02890 297880
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland: www.equalityni.org
Twitter: @EqualityCommNI

Tel: 02890 500 600

- Mencap NI: www.mencap.org.uk/northern-ireland
Email: helpline.ni@mencap.org.uk
Twitter: @Mencap_NI
Tel: 028 9069 1351
- Mindwise: www.mindwisenv.org/
Twitter: @MindwiseNV
Facebook: www.facebook.com/MindWisenv
Tel: 028 2323 9040
- Orchardville Society: www.orchardville.com
Email: info@orchardville.com
Twitter: @orchardvillesoc
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/The-Orchardville-Society
Tel: 02890 732326
- Queen's University Belfast Disability Services
Email: disability.office@qub.ac.uk
Web: www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/
Address: Student Guidance Centre, University Road
Belfast BT7 1NN
Tel: 028 9097 2727
- Royal National Institute of the Blind: www.rnib.org.uk
Twitter: @RNIB
Facebook: www.facebook.com/rnibuk
Tel: 030 3123 9999
- The Cedar Foundation: www.cedar-foundation.org
Email: info@cedar-foundation.org
Twitter: @cedarfoundation
Facebook: www.facebook.com/CedarFoundation
Tel: 02890 666188
- Triangle Housing Association: www.trianglehousing.org.uk
Tel: 02827 666880
- Ulster Supported Employment Limited: www.usel.co.uk
Email: info@usel.co.uk
Tel: 02890 356600