Mainstreaming Equality in the University of the Highlands and Islands

Team: **Student Services – Executive Office**

Protected characteristic: **Disability**

Advancing equality of opportunity/Fostering good relations

Key area/example of where progress has been made with regard to equality and diversity:
Additional Support Online System

Action we have taken to progress this key area:

The University's web-based Additional Support Online system has been further developed, as evidenced by the completion of Phase 2 of our Additional Support Online project.

The Additional Support Online system records a student's interactions with Academic Partner student services and is open to Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) students. It enables students, disability practitioners and other relevant staff to access and work from a single source of data on a need-to-know basis, regardless of geographic location.

A key benefit of Additional Support Online is that it utilises the University's UHI Records portal (https://www.studentjourney.uhi.ac.uk) to promote further transparency in the provision of student support and promotes the student as an equal partner in this process. This in turn assists the University in delivering an equivalent experience of additional support for students across the University partnership. Current functions of the live system include:

Student support practitioners	Students
Schedule appointments with and/or for a student, and view upcoming appointments.	Schedule appointments with support staff.
Print a University dyslexia sticker for an eligible student.	Print a University dyslexia sticker if the use of dyslexia stickers has been agreed within the student's PLSP
Arrange equipment loans and view details of assistive technologies on loan to students.	View details of equipment loaned to them.
View/Create/Amend a student's Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP).	View and approve their PLSP.
View all students for the current year that have them identified as their support worker.	View the exam arrangements that have been agreed for them.
Create a new DSA Quality Monitoring Form and view previous quality monitoring forms they have submitted. (This facility is available to University DSA needs assessors only).	

Measures we are using to monitor our progress:

The Additional Support Online project is now largely complete. Therefore the system is now maintained in the same manner as other services offered wthin UHI Records. A development list is used to prioritise larger areas of development. Day-to-day technical issues are logged and monitored through the University Servicedesk

Practitioner feedback remains key to gathering feedback on the use of Additional Support Online, as evidenced in minutes of the University's Disability Practitioners Group. Student feedback is also welcomed through the University's Red Button service (https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/students/support/red-button)

The University's Student Support Manager recently convened an Admissions and Student Support short life working group, which included representatives of Student Support, Disability Practitioners, Admissions, Management Information Systems (MIS) and the Highlands and Islands Students' Association. The group provided an opportunity to gather feedback directly from users of Additional Support Online and helped to identify areas for development.

The increased availability of on-demand data reports is particularly beneficial in monitoring the uptake of the Additional Support Online system throughout the University partnership.

Evidence of progress that has been made:

In May 2016, the University's Disability Coordinator contributed to the University's Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR). This provided an opportunity to highlight the steps taken to develop the Additional Support Online System and progress made in strengthening the University's disability support provision in recent years,

Over 1500 PLSPs were created in UHI Records system for both HE and FE students throughout the partnership in 2015/16. Key developments include:

- The increased availability of on-demand reports in the University's Bridge reporting system. These enable relevant staff to access data without necessarily having full access to Additional Support Online.
- The introduction of a document upload facility, enabling practitioners to attach relevant documentation to a student's record.
- The increased functionality of the internal form used to quality assure Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) needs assessments conducted internally.
- The development of a unified referral tool, which enables students to be referred to Home Academic Partner Student Services, having disclosed an additional need.
- The introduction of a new screen layout in order to make the system more user-friendly for practitioners.
- The University's Disability Support Coordinator now delivers staff training on Additional Support Online, in collaboration with the University's Management Information Systems (MIS) Manager (who oversees the technical development of the system) as appropriate.

The uptake of the Additional Support Online system continues to grow, and the majority of Academic Partners have adopted the system. The development of Additional Support Online to date has been particularly helpful in establishing common procedures for the University partnership, notwithstanding local variations in Academic Partner business processes.

Challenges that have been faced in progressing this key area:

A key challenge has been to raise awareness of the procedures associated with Additional Support Online amongst new members of staff in particular.

Further action we intend to take:

As recommended by the University's Admissions and Student Support SLWG, consideration will be given to how staff awareness of existing processes might be improved.

Awareness-raising measures are likely to include the use of bitesize articles in staff newsletters to highlight relevant features of Additional Support Online. These would be published in addition to the existing, more detailed, guidance currently available to staff.