



# **Single Equality Scheme Annual Report**

**1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021**  
College objectives 2021/22

## Foreword

This academic year has not been without its challenges. What is evident is that we have a dedicated and committed workforce who want to ensure that our students have the best possible learning experience. All staff have continued to ensure that the college remains a place where learning and working exists in an environment that advances equality of opportunity, celebrates diversity, and allows everyone to achieve their fullest potential. The scheme serves to complement the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the Equality for Students report.

The Single Equality Scheme recognises our legal responsibilities as set out in the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the protected characteristics of sex, gender reassignment, disability, race, age, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and sexual orientation.

Equality, Diversity and inclusion is regularly reported upon and rigorously monitored by Senior Management, Corporation and Curriculum Teams.

### **Progress on objectives for 2020/21**

Detailed below is the college progress against the objectives set for 2020/21.

#### **1. Develop the Mental Health Strategy for staff and students and ensure that this is promoted College wide.**

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for staff and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Effective Learning were ratified at the start of 2021. The strategies complement the College Mental Health Charter and recognise the impact of mental health and wellbeing within working and learning and demonstrate how the college has continued to create a positive working environment that supports staff mental health and wellbeing by lifting the stigma surrounding mental health and providing an inclusive, caring and supportive learning community for our students.

#### **2. Created an online portal with a focus on mental health and wellbeing.**

The portal provides tools to support and guide staff in promoting mental health and wellbeing in themselves and in those that they manage. The portal will be moved over to SharePoint, in line with the current College process, throughout academic year 2021/22.

#### **3. Achieve Better Health at Work Award.**

Our portfolio has been submitted and the college will be notified in September 2021 if we have achieved the bronze award. Initial feedback from our mentor and initial assessment showed that the submission was really strong. The college will naturally progress to work towards silver award this next academic year.

#### **4. Ensure the Access Fund for those students who require additional support to help them participate in teaching, learning and assessment.**

Initiatives introduced for 2020/21 included the increase in eligible household income from £26,500 to £32,000, introduction of a tiered payment system of household income, and a termly bursary payment to students. The Office for Students allocated additional funding for our HE students which complemented our existing HE hardship bursary. It is evident initiatives worked as there has been an increase in students receiving bursary support in 20/21.

## **Key changes for staff in 2020/21**

The College has an outstanding reputation for the quality and scope of provision and is committed to promoting widening participation through raising aspirations and achievement and eliminating barriers to engagement. Some of the key changes that have taken place this academic year are stated below.

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group**

In recognition that there were crossovers and similarities within Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and mental health and wellbeing it was agreed that the two Steering Groups should be combined. The group has continued to explore ways in which the College can continue to drive forward both agendas.

### **Digital support for staff and students**

Support has continued for staff and students who have disabilities or need extra support to work/learn from home. Health and Safety have been working with staff to support set-ups at home, DSE guidance and workstation exercises; this has been complemented by the work that our IT Team and Student Support Team have been doing to ensure that staff can continue to work and our students to learn.

### **Safeguarding, Preventing Radicalisation and Fundamental British Values**

New guidance for Keeping Children Safe in Education will be released in August 2021, it is anticipated that this guidance will have an impact on the support, policies and practices across college. Fundamental British Values and the Prevent Duty continue to be promoted and embedded across college and the PDBA steering group monitor the content and information being shared within the curriculum. The Prevent agenda extends into and complements, not replacing the integration and embedding of equality, diversity and inclusion.

### **Mindful Employer**

The College continues to be a Mindful Employer. Mental health is everyone's business and good mental health and resilience are fundamental to physical health, relationships, education, training, work and to achieving our potential.

### **Level 2 Disability Confident Employer**

The College is still a level 2 disability confident employer, the work being completed for the Better Health at Work Award will contribute evidence towards this should we move to applying to be a Disability Confident Leader in the future.

### **Better Health at Work Award County Durham**

In addition to the information stated on page 2, we have trained five staff to be Health Advocates and their role is to support staff and students across College. Created a calendar of health and wellbeing activities for 21/22 available for all staff and students. Feedback from our submitted portfolio will give us further actions to move forward with in 2021/22.

### **Durham Resilience Project**

We have now completed our engagement with Durham Resilience Project. The actions from engagement with this project has supplemented our mental health strategies and our portfolio for the Better Health at Work Award.

## **Domestic Abuse Policy**

New College Durham recognises that domestic abuse is a serious issue and that incidents of domestic abuse are common and critically affect many people's lives. New College Durham's policy was published in June 2020 and acknowledges that domestic abuse can affect an individual's work performance, and that New College Durham as an employer has a responsibility for health, safety and welfare at work.

## **Menopause and the Workplace Policy (to be ratified)**

The College recognises that employees experiencing the menopause, whether before, during, or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional support and adjustments. The College, through this policy, supports workers experiencing the menopause for them to feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work.

## **Impact of Brexit**

As we move through uncertain times dealing with the outcome of Brexit and the changes to employment law that might be seen as a consequence of the impact of coronavirus, it is clear that the College will continue to be flexible and responsive to legislative changes and will ensure that when required any relevant changes to policy or practice are reflected through communication with Trade Unions and our staff. This ensures that there is clarity, fairness and openness for all.

## **Staff Development**

The College has continued to offer a varied CPD offer. Although this has been delivered through a blend of face to face and remote sessions. Staff have responded well to the progression to more online learning and webinars. Some examples of the different activities staff have engaged with are given below.

- Emotional well-being and resilience

- SEND awareness for curriculum, corporate and support staff

- Mental Health and Wellbeing Level 2 award

## **Covid-19**

The College remained responsive throughout and ensured that staff were updated through weekly bulletins from the Senior Leadership Team. This was complemented with half termly "Supporting you" updates that covered some key themes.

There was continued support for staff from Human Resources, Occupational Health, Health and Safety, our Counsellor and services provided by Advice, Support and Guidance Team.

## **Enrolment**

The College encourages and promotes good practice. Staff engaged in the enrolment process have all received training and information to support them to ensure that we collate relevant and appropriate data from students and that students understand what the data will be used for.

## Staffing data

New College Durham is committed to the development of positive policies and practices to promote equal opportunities and support an appropriate learning and work-life balance.

Annually, data and statistics are gathered to allow the College to continually review policies and practices in line with government guidelines, policy and law. Updates are reported to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Health and Wellbeing Steering Group who ensure that we are advancing equality and diversity and fostering good relations.

This academic year there has been a slight decrease in the number of staff employed by the College in 2020/21 from 729 in 2019/20 to 687. Factors contributing to this slight decrease can be attributed to the impact of Covid19, as many staff have considered their future. Several staff have decided to take early retirement and some staff have made career changes. The college also conducted a thorough cleanse of our supply pool which resulted in staff who were registered asking to be removed.

As reported in previous years male/female ratio for staff and students remains consistent and has been static for several years.

The average age of our overall workforce is currently 46 years old. This is representative of the general overall FE workforce. The age range of our students is consistent with previous years. Curriculum staff continually review our curriculum offer to ensure that it is representative of the requirements of the overall community.

The College continues to foster good relations between different racial and/or ethnic groups, national origins, or nationalities. All staff and students are encouraged to declare their race/ethnicity. We continue to develop our support and curriculum structures to ensure that they are representative of the College community.

The staff population is broadly representative of the students we support, with 91% reporting as White British; our College community continues to remain slightly more diverse than the general population of County Durham (2011 Census) reporting 96.6% of the regional population as White British. Any changes from the new census data will be reflected in the Single Equality Scheme in 2021/22.

We will continue to monitor our application process and adapt the application process if necessary. A priority for the future would be to develop a recruitment strategy which would allow us the opportunity to consider and implement the placement of ads, utilising the right advertising mediums (technology) and wording. The College will strive to become an employer of choice and a provider of education and training both nationally and locally.

## **Key changes for students 2020-2021**

A broad range of courses and activities ensures that the College offer is representative of the requirements of the overall community. Staff support for students throughout this academic year has been outstanding. Covid has continued to challenge us all, but what is evident is that staff have gone above and beyond to ensure that all of our students have had a positive learning experience.

### **HE Students extra support from OfS**

The Higher Education to Support Continued Engagement in Learning was funded by the Office for Students and administered by New College Durham. The purpose of this funding was to support higher education students who are facing hardship, particularly where it is needed to support their continuation of study and successful outcomes. This support was in addition to that provided by the HE hardship bursary.

### **Free meal support**

The College has continued to support those students who traditionally receive free meals in college through a range of mechanisms. The College has worked with the Local Authority and helped to distribute their winter, spring and summer voucher schemes. In addition, during lockdown, a payment was made direct to eligible students who would normally access free meals.

### **IT support for students due to remote working**

Provision of IT support for students who were continuing to learn remotely. IT poverty was identified as not only the lack of suitable IT through hardship, but also the lack of suitable IT facilities through other home circumstances. As a result of these findings, and to remove this barrier to learning and quality engagement, we have carried out student surveys and assessments on the availability of IT and deployed laptops to these students who were assessed as requiring IT.

### **Student Support**

Governors have had regular updates on the support given to our students during the three lockdowns and subsequent reopening of the college.

The College continues to employ extensive and highly skilled student support teams (e.g. Advisory, Support and Counselling (ASC) team, Learning Support Assistants, Disability Advisers, Curriculum Support Coaches and Personal Learning Coaches) who are focussed on supporting all students through their educational journey. For students that need additional support the resources are available through these teams to provide individualised and focussed support.

The information contained within this report complements the Equality for Student report which will be available in November 2021 which goes into more detail as to the support and work that has taken place with our students.

## **Key Objectives for 2021/22**

The key objectives for the next academic year developed with due cognisance of NCD Strategic Priorities and Plan, key strategies (e.g. Curriculum Strategy, Employer Engagement Strategy and Student Engagement Strategy) and supplemented key outcomes from:

- SAR 2020/21
- Quality Improvement Plan 2020/21
- Higher Education Access and Participation Plan
- Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group
- Team meetings

The key strategic objectives for the next academic year are to:

1. Improve attendance, engagement and achievement in maths and English functional Skills notably for vulnerable and disadvantaged students.
2. Ensure policies, processes and training are amended and updated in line with guidance changes for Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021/22.
3. All staff to complete SEND online training; this is embedded across curriculum, and corporate services are aware of their obligations.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering group will monitor and review these objectives.

For further information on the objectives for academic year 2020/21 please see Appendix A – action plan. The action plan complements the College Operational Plan, Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Staff and the Human Resources Strategy specifically relating to culture and wellbeing, workforce planning and leadership. The action plan has also been designed considering the measures outlined in the Wellbeing Strategy for Effective Learning.

## Conclusion

All staff work hard to ensure that the curriculum offer and support we provide meets the needs of government, employers and the regional economy.

Highly effective planning and promotion of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion continues to ensure legislative compliance is met.

The scheme and policy help us to ensure the College's objectives are at the forefront of our work, engaging our staff in the vision for the future and our students are at the heart of the College, embedding their needs.

The Single Equality Scheme (SES) report for 2020/21 demonstrates the vibrant environment at New College Durham and our commitment to.

- *Changing lives for the better enabling people of **all abilities** to fulfil their potential.*
- *Celebrating achievement in learning for people of **all abilities**.*
- *Fulfilling our commitment to equality and diversity and the rights of others.*

The College continues a journey for **Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion** and **Engagement** for all and this is continuous and thoroughly embedded into the College culture.

Although there has been a change with senior members of staff retiring from the College this academic year, effective contingency planning has enabled the College to reallocate its workforce to ensure that the departments/services are not affected.

The College will continue to explore ways the existing workforce can be developed to ensure that we have a competent and qualified workforce of the future.

Throughout 2021/22 data will be reviewed and any emerging cross-College trends or themes will be prioritised, and opportunities explored as to ways in which the College can further enhance the experience for staff and students.



## Appendix A - Key Objectives for 2021/22

	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Impact measure</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Responsibility</b>	<b>Actions for 2020/21</b>
1	Improve attendance, engagement and achievement in maths and English functional Skills notably for vulnerable and disadvantage students.	Increase in vulnerable/disadvantaged students' achievement in line with all other non-disadvantaged students	September 2021 through to March 2022	Curriculum Review and Performance Monitoring Visits. Heads of School Quality Team Improving Learning Manager Training and Development Manager	Heads of Department to explore models of delivery to ensure that all students notably those who are vulnerable/disadvantaged are supported to achieve through the promotion and embedding of students' engagement with maths and English.
2	Ensure policies, processes and training are amended and updated in line with guidance changes for Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021/22.	Processes and systems used for effective recruitment, selection, essential employee relations and performance management are fair and equal to all.	December 2021	Training and Development Manager  Director of Human resources/Head of Human Resources.  Managers.	Review guidance in KCSIE September 2021 and ensure that our recruitment processes are reflective of any changes.  Ensure managers receive adequate training on the new guidance and are aware of changes to policy or process.
3	All staff to complete SEND online training and this is embedded across curriculum and corporate services are aware of their obligations.	All staff will complete SEND online training and this will be embedded into induction process and recruitment checks.  Demonstration in practice and reflected in key documentation (e.g. learning walks)	December 2021	Training and Development Manager	SEND training package will be developed with Marshalls and will form part of our suite of training for all staff. Existing staff will be expected to complete this and this will then be embedded into our induction/recruitment checks for new staff.