



**Single Equality
Committee**

**Annual Report
2023 - 2024**

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Leadership and Management



1 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The College actively embraces its role to promote educational opportunities for all, including those who have not traditionally accessed education and training. The College's values, policies and practices are designed to ensure that students from a wide range of backgrounds, abilities and cultures are encouraged to take advantage of the educational and training opportunities on offer and are supported to be successful. The College plays an integral role in the promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion both in the internal college community and within the wider context of Blackburn with Darwen.
- Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a statutory obligation to annually report on the progress which we have made under the general duties of:
 - *Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation*
 - *Advance equality of opportunity between different persons and*
 - *Foster good relations between different groups*
- This Annual Report reflects our unified approach to the statutory obligations to detail progress on targets in relation to staff and student protected characteristics and identify gaps in reporting, where applicable. Our Equality Objectives (2020-2024) encompass 13 targets for the College to focus on in order to advance the Equality and Diversity agenda.
- The Principal, Executive team and College Leadership team commit significant resources and guarantee objectives are in place to ensure that Equality and Diversity values are fully embedded within the whole college. Rigorous targets are set in the annual Single Equality plan to ensure the whole college is more responsive to issues relating to all protected characteristics.
- The College was inspected by Ofsted in January 2022 and the concluding report positively commented on the promotion of British Values as a strength at college:

Students and apprentices develop a good understanding of life in modern Britain. They benefit from a tutorial programme that covers a range of topics, such as British values, online safety and healthy relationships. During induction, ESOL students develop a good understanding of what it means to live and study in the United Kingdom. Health and social care students understand fully how the law protects vulnerable adults in relation to their deprivation of liberty.

- This commitment was further enhanced with the work of the cross-College Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender+ (LGBTQ+) Champion. This role is in place to support the LGBTQ+ agenda for staff and students in terms of awareness raising and creation of resources to further advance the agenda through the curriculum. The impact of this role is the ongoing support provided to students who identify as LGBTQ+ or allies through the various support networks to address and to promote good practice.
- In terms of teaching, learning and assessment, our courses, materials and quality assurance procedures all reflect a commitment to the principles of equality and diversity. In 2023-2024 of the class-based observations and learning walks there were no significant actions relating to equality and diversity and examples of good practice were seen. Teaching and assessing staff are supported to maximize any opportunities to support equality and diversity issues during the course of lessons.
- Across the College we share a core set of values in everything we do. They state what we value highly as staff and make a firm statement about how we operate. Of our College Values 'Equity' and 'Respect' are prominent alongside 'Commitment' and 'Excellence and Empower'. "Fundamental British Values" also form part of the College Values. The key aspects of "Fundamental British Values" are introduced at induction and form a golden thread throughout curriculum, personal development and tutorial activities.

- Safeguarding and pastoral care are highly effective at supporting students in building self-confidence and awareness in staying safe both inside and outside the College and online. Provision to support the development of independent skills in High Needs students is effective. Fundamental British Values are promoted across the College through the vehicle of shared 'College Values'. The College values framework has been mapped to Fundamental British Values to ensure that it meets the needs of Blackburn College students and links with the local community. The Head of Student Experience and Head of Inclusion work closely with the Director of Student Support and Experience to ensure students in both Further and Higher Education in College have the same opportunities, the same information and to promote the values of the whole College.
- All managers and teaching staff have received training on Fundamental British Values, the updated Home Office Prevent training and Working to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP). Further WRAP training sessions and those on Child Sexual Exploitation and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) have been recognised as mandatory training for all staff. All of the Safeguarding team and senior leaders have been trained on this key area of activity. The College has a referral system, 'Channel', which was developed in liaison with the local Prevent steering group. Staff have also attended workshops delivered via Small Steps in relation to radicalisation.
- Mandatory staff training including WRAP is available for all staff both online and face to face. The classroom-based workshops enable colleagues to identify the risks and threats of radicalisation and extremism. The College reviews and evaluates this training regularly to ensure the content is current and relevant to the FE/HE sector. The Director for Student Support and Experience and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Head of Student Experience have completed specialist themed Prevent training and is the only external agent currently invited to attend sessions delivered by the Counter Terrorism Police and North West Prevent Teams. Feedback from the College training is that staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding students from extremism and radicalisation both locally and nationally.
- Extensive Equity and Diversity training packages are delivered to staff at different levels from awareness raising to refresher sessions on the Equality Act 2010. This training is mandatory and is through a rolling cycle every 2 years. It addresses individual roles and responsibilities.
- The College is currently at 95% compliance (September 2024) for this training and this positively impacts on staff understanding and their confidence in discussing issues around equality and diversity in practice and reinforces that equality and diversity is everybody's business.
- The HR and OD strategies are supportive of mainstreaming Equity and Diversity issues. This means we work hard to recruit a more culturally diverse staff group also as role models to attract a more diverse student body and look at our policies and actions that acknowledge and promote equity, diversity, access and inclusion as an integral part of College life. This is reflected in our workforce figures in relation to recruiting a diverse workforce.
- The College has a Single Equity Committee which is chaired by the Director of Student Support and Experience and works collaboratively to promote ownership of Equality and equity issues across College with representation from all areas of the College. This Committee oversees the completion of the single equality action plan. The College also sponsors One Voice which is a Community Interest Company (CIC) that aspires to create an inclusive, cohesive and vibrant community in Blackburn and Darwen.
- Students benefit from a broad range of effective enrichment activities including sporting activities, that promote healthy living/lifestyles, and link to mental wellbeing. Several enrichment clubs have been running including, animation club, coding club, creative writing club, sustainability , book club hair and beauty club and Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award, with other activity planned by the Student Voice Participation and Enrichment Coordinator and a Health and Wellbeing timetable including activity for students with disabilities, single and mixed sex group activity and closed

groups for hard to reach students, which is planned by the Student Health, Wellbeing and Extra Curricula Coordinator.

- The introduction of the Student Assistance Programme (SAP) has provided invaluable support to our students who need it along with advice and guidance for a variety of issues. This support is needed at all times and is not restricted to the College day, and that's what makes this service so important to our students, it is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Health Assured have attended our open events and freshers fair to inform students of the service as well as promotion of the 'my healthy advantage app' and the benefits of downloading this and using the content to their advantage. We receive regular reports on student engagement with the SAP and any safeguarding concerns are passed on to the safeguarding team who are alerted through reporting so nothing is missed. This is proving to be a positive, supportive partnership with excellent communication and always being on hand not only to students but also to key staff to be able to feedback those issues students are seeking support for, and for us here at College to provide further resources to help tackle some of the issues faced by young people today.
- A total of 1375 safeguarding contacts were received in 2023/2024 which is an increase of 20% compared to 2022/2023, resulting in 184 (level 2) cases requiring active intervention and 509 (level 1) students who were further identified needing intervention but not prolonged support. The rest of the referrals did not meet threshold for escalation.
- During this academic year we have used the Lancashire Police Encompass alert system to support further safeguarding support and interventions. 195 encompass Police referrals were made to the College, which then led to support and intervention from our safeguarding and pastoral team.
- 182 students with criminal convictions were assessed in total over the course of the academic year.
- Due to a more accurate and robust reporting system (SmoothWall alerts) the number of incidents flagged were 284. Each of these alerts are triaged and followed up by a visit to the student should support be needed or contact with tutor if the alert is regarding inappropriate usage of computer systems in college.
- There has been an increase in cases relating to mental health and wellbeing, which continues to be an issue. Suicidal intent accounting for 29% of cases and Mental health related concerns account for 31% of cases.
- The College makes a significant contribution to social cohesion through a range of engagement with local events highlighting events such as hate crime. Information about major religious festivals is disseminated regularly to staff to discuss with students and colleagues. Staff and Student Voice are utilised to ensure differences are acknowledged and stakeholders have an opportunity to share their views on points of interest. For example, mental health awareness and anti-bullying week were both embedded in the student enrichment calendar with opportunities for staff Continuous Professional Development (CPD).



Blackburn
College

Key Facts about our Community

2 KEY FACTS ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

- Blackburn College is a large general further education College and the rapidly developing main campus is situated in the heart of Blackburn town centre, within a mile radius of the College there are two schools with Sixth Forms and private schools with A-level provision. Each year the College provides learning opportunities to 7000 students at all levels and across a wide range of sectors.
- In Blackburn with Darwen 60% of the population is white. The proportion of the population who are Black and Minority Ethnic group (BAME), at 31%, was by far the highest in the Lancashire-14 areas. The rate was three times greater than for Lancashire-14 and regional averages. Almost 45,500 people in Blackburn with Darwen were in the BAME category.
- The percentage of disadvantaged students (pre-16) within the borough is 33.6% and remains at around 7% above the national rate of 27.3. Blackburn College has 61% of students from disadvantaged postcodes and 28% of students are from BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) backgrounds (this figure rises to 36% for FE). Around 28% of the borough's residents are from an Asian heritage background, with 69% from a White ethnic group. Between 2014 and 2039 the population of the borough is projected to decline by 2,698 (1.8%) to 144,045.
- Blackburn with Darwen has an unemployment rate currently of 5.7%, which is 1.5% above the North West rate and 2% above the UK unemployment rate. With high levels of social deprivation, basic skills levels, including English as an additional language, are low. 28% of jobs within the borough are paid below the living wage. 91.2% of Blackburn with Darwen residents either spoke English as their main language, or if it was not their main language, spoke it well, compared to 95.5% in England and Wales.
- 33.8% of the working-age population of Blackburn with Darwen has a degree or other higher education qualification, significantly lower than the regional average of 38%.
- Blackburn with Darwen is a Prevent priority area and the College engages effectively with this Prevent agenda. The College has strong and supportive links with partners, including local authorities, the police (Prevent and Channel) and the regional FE/HE Prevent coordinator to develop stringent information-sharing protocols and share intelligence. A member of the College Leadership team is the nominated Single Point of Contact (SPoC) for Prevent/Channel and is a member of the local and regional Prevent Partnership Meetings and represents FE/HE at the Lancashire Channel Panel. A Prevent risk assessment is in place (informed by the Counter Terrorism Local Profile) and reviewed termly with associated action plans developed to a high quality and cover all aspects of the 'Prevent' duty, including risk and threat.
- The economy of Blackburn with Darwen exhibits diversification as older traditional industries are replaced by employers in the high technology sector. Manufacturing, notably in aerospace and engineering, continues to be important. 35% of the working age population is not in work which comprises of 30% males and 42% of females, and for those who are in work, full-time earnings are 19% below the national average. With high levels of social deprivation, basic skills levels, including English as an additional language, are low.
- The College is committed to Widening Participation in learning at all levels in order to meet the skills gaps and respond to the needs of both individuals and employers. Changes to the curriculum are reviewed on an annual basis through both business planning and Governance in response to labour market information, local, regional and national priorities.
- It is within this challenging environment that the College operates and works in partnership with the Borough Council and others to make improvements to life chances and meet the skills needs of our local community.

College Student Profile



Attendance of English has increased by 4% now sitting at (71%) and Maths has increased by 7% now sitting at (70%). It is a well-recognised national issue relating to the governmental priority for English and Maths GCSE to be taught to all 16-18-year-old students who do not achieve a Grade 4 on exiting the mainstream education system.

General Trends

- Relation to Student Participation



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College



4 GENERAL TRENDS IN RELATION TO STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Further Education

- The proportion of females studying in FE at the college in 2023-2024 is 54% this is the same the previous year. Male students are at 46%.
- 40% of FE students are classified as White; this is a 2% decrease from the previous year. 48% of FE students are Asian.
- 78% of students are eligible for disadvantage uplift which is a 1% increase from previous year.
- The percentage of students with a declared learning difficulty and/or disability is 27%, a 2% increase from the previous year.
- There has been a 15% increase in the proportion of learners studying at Entry and level 1 compared to last year. 27% of the cohort in FE 16-18 study at level 1 or below.

Higher Education

- In the University Centre the gender split at present is 73% of the students in 2023-2024 being female and 27% being male.
- 27% of full-time students declared a disability or learning difficulty.

Apprenticeships

- Apprentice numbers for Blackburn leavers decreased from 290 leavers in 2022-2023 to 278 for 2023-2024. Achievement data has however risen from 66.7% in 2022-2023 to 67.9% in 2023-2024.
- The proportion of Blackburn female apprenticeship starts is 53% in 2023/24, this is a 6% decrease from the previous year. There continues to be a significant gender bias across many Apprenticeship standards: Customer Service, Hair, Beauty, Human Resources and Early Years Practitioner and Educator all have significant female participation. In contrast, Plumbing has predominantly male participation. However, the College has been successful in offering and recruiting to a number of programmes to address this for example small female numbers on motor vehicle, plumbing, brickwork and electrical. Female learners in 2023/2024 = 165 across 29 standards (1 on plumbing and 1 on brick).
- Blackburn female achievement in 23/24 has increased by 1.5% finishing at 72.9%, this is above the overall apprentices achievement. It lies circa 29 percentage points above national rate.
- The proportion of Blackburn male starts in 23/24 is 47%, this is a 5% increase on 22/23. Blackburn male achievement in 23/24 has increased by 1.6% finishing at 61.8%.
- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Blackburn learners account for 15% of apprenticeship starts which is a 1% decrease on this time last year. Achievement rates of 72.1%, this is 13.9 percentage points above National Rate and above college apprentice overall achievement.
- The percentage of starts with a declared learning difficulty and/or disability is 12% (30 leavers) Achievement lies at 71%, 21.9% points above national rate.

General Trends

- Relation to Student Success



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5 GENERAL TRENDS IN RELATION TO STUDENT SUCCESS

16-18 FE

- The age group 16-18 achievement has increased from 91.2% to 93.2%, this significantly outperforms other FE colleges in the region and country.
- The gap between achievement of Asian students 93.8% compared to White students 90.7% has further narrowed significantly in the last year.

Apprenticeships

- All 16-18 148 starts - best case achievement 64.3%.
- Female 16-18 – 71 starts – best case achievement 69%.
- Male 16-18 – 72 starts – best case achievement 59.7%.

Higher Education

- Male achievement in 2023-2024 has decreased to 54.3%. Female achievement also decreased to 62.7%.
- White British male achievement increased to 62.8% with those of Asian ethnicity have also seen a significant increase in achievement to 70.5%, which is an increase of 4.8%.

Learner Re-Engagement (Starting Out Right Now)

- The College is proactively involved in re-engagement activity for 16-18-year olds to help individuals in the community and looks at a variety of strategies that could either help a young person from becoming a NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) statistic or to offer someone who is NEET an opportunity to follow a personal pathway of learning. Referrals are forwarded from schools, in college, external agencies, social services, youth offending team and The Princes Trust. An action plan is developed and records any external agency involvement.
- The aim of these programmes is to re-engage students on a personalised programme or a modular programme and many have been re-introduced in the centres they initially came from and were successful and in most cases achieved a full or partial qualification.
- Some of the benefits on offer to students are:
 - Subsidised bus pass.
 - Cash bursary.
 - Up to £200 to spend on food and drink at college cafes.
 - College lunch (subsidised).
 - Stationary/printing bursary of up to £60 to spend in the college library.
 - Free uniform and specialist kit.
 - All University Centre full time students can apply for the '£500 Bonus for Full-Time students' again this is not means tested. This is for help with course related costs.

Student Satisfaction Surveys



6 STUDENT SATISFACTION RATINGS

Student Satisfaction Surveys

Student Voice is gathered in a number of ways across FE and HE including surveys on; Enrolment and Induction, Open Events, Quality of Education and Prevent. We are also subject to the National Student Survey (NSS).

Currently 84% of eligible students for 2023/2024, (up by 5% on 22/23) completed the NSS Student Satisfaction survey with significantly more females responding to the survey. The College has had some of the highest participation and satisfaction rates across the North West which is an outstanding achievement.

Internal surveys for FE students show that Student satisfaction is 91% and this intern correlates with the 91% cross college FE achievement.

Staffing and Governance



7 STAFFING AND GOVERNANCE

Staff Headcount

The College employed 693 members of staff (739 contracts), totalling 536 FTE on the 31 July 2024. This is a slight decrease compared to the same period last year where the College employed 714 members of staff (787 contracts).

Gender Profile

The College population remains predominantly female (63.6%) which is comparable to the same period last year and the sector norm of 63%.

The table below shows the gender profile as at 31 July 2024 which remains in line with the sector norm (64% female employees and 36% male employees).

Gender	Academic	Business Support	Management	Total
Male	152 (42.34%)	121 (30.79%)	10 (28.57%)	283 (35.96%)
Female	207 (57.66%)	272 (69.21%)	25 (71.43%)	504 (64.04%)
Total	359	393	35	787

The gender balance for teaching staff remains in line with the sector average of 59% female employees, with the proportion of female staff in the academic category at 57%. Female representation in the management category (71%) remains higher than the sector average of 58%. Amongst business support staff, female representation (69%) is in line with the sector average of 70%.

Disability Profile

The proportion of staff with a declared disability in the current reporting period is 8.64%, this is comparable with the previous year (8.59%). The College continues to welcome and support staff with declared disabilities, investing in occupational health support and the College Employee Assistance Programme.

Contract	Disabled	Not Disabled
Academic	10.31%	89.69%
Business Support	7.38%	92.62%
Management	5.71%	94.29%
Total	8.64%	91.36%

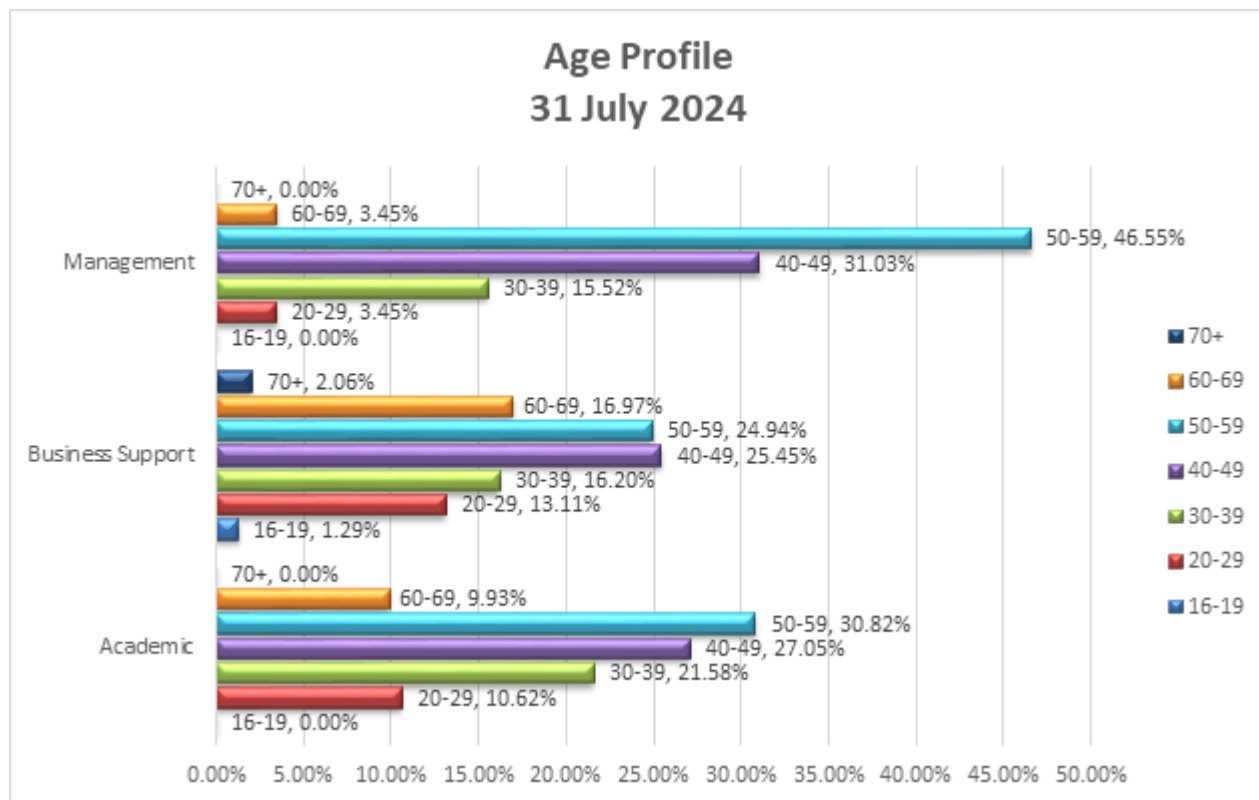
Ethnicity Profile

The proportion of staff with a declared disability was 9.61% which is higher than the previous year (8.64%) as well as the sector norm (7.3%). The College continues to welcome and support staff with declared disabilities, investing in occupational health support and the College Employee Assistance Programme.



Age Profile

The data indicates that the under 20 age group remains slightly unrepresented (1.29%) when compared to the sector data. The most up to benchmarking data from the AoC College Workforce Survey 2020/21 indicates that this age group represents 2% of college sector employees.



Disability Confident – Employer

The Disability Confident Scheme is voluntary, and aims to help employers successfully employ and retain disabled people and those with health conditions. Being Disability Confident is a unique opportunity to lead the way in our community.

Some of the commitments that the College agrees to in order to maintain this status are:

- Offering an interview that is inclusive for all people in order to meet the minimum criteria for the job.
- Providing paid employment (permanent or fixed term).
- Promoting a culture of being Inclusive.
- Providing occupational health services/support as required if required.

The College has joined the Disability Confident scheme since 2016 and the Employer logo is prominent on all job adverts with a separate statement to say that we particularly welcome applicants with a disability. We also display the logo on the Human Resources SharePoint site and internal emails to ensure it is promoted to our employees and have recently renewed this scheme until 2025.

Health and Wellbeing

Through our Organisational Development (OD) service, we offer a range of activities, guidance and awareness to help ensure we embed a strong culture of workplace wellbeing. In 2023-2024 we offered a number of CPD events, support services and activities events. Some examples of how we do this are listed below:

- Awareness Days – Throughout the year on our CPD days, activities have been made available to help promote wellbeing to staff. Some of the campaigns that we have supported over the last 12 months include Mental Health Awareness sessions, take a break- have a Kit Kat, World

Mental Health Day, Organ and Blood donation week and breast cancer awareness. We promote awareness material via email, College information, posters, and SharePoint.

- Physical Health – in partnership with the Council staff have subsidised rates for the onsite gym.
- Cycle to Work Scheme – we also offer Cycle to Work, which enables employees to get a bike tax-free, saving 25-39% on the high street value. The scheme helps staff save money, be healthier and be more environmentally friendly.
- Employee Assistance Programme – the College also operates a 24/7 EAP to staff, the benefit of this is staff have access to professionals to talk about issues facing them at home. This aims to keep our workforce healthy while minimising the additional worry about cost. Staff are utilising this health benefit scheme proactively.
- Health and Wellbeing Events – Throughout the year, we launch health and wellbeing events in partnership with the gym and our sports coordinator. We offer a comprehensive package of wellbeing initiatives, services and activities to encourage and motivate staff to look after their health, both physically and emotionally. We hold the events on staff development days so the maximum amount of staff can attend. An example of the activities/services available for staff include Yoga, Badminton, Basket Ball, Table Tennis, Barbering and Beauty therapy, Mental Health and Stress awareness sessions, Slimming World, Meditation, Diabetes Awareness, Dementia Awareness, BMI checks.

Equality Training

We have delivered a range of Equality and Diversity training in College both as classroom sessions and ongoing eLearning packages. We have also approved training requests for staff to attend external courses as featured below (* denotes mandatory training):

- Equity and Diversity Training *
- Unconscious Bias *
- Hate Crime
- LGBTQI training
- Trans Training
- Mental Health and Suicide Awareness
- Bullying and Harassment

Equality Analysis (EA)



Blackburn
College



8 EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

The College has maintained a programme of Equality Analysis (EA's) in response to its legal obligations and also as a good practice measure. EAs in 2023-2024 have focused on policies and processes with a total of 40 policies approved through our Policies and Procedures Committee all of which have considered and made a declaration on Equality Impact.

The College's Lead for EDI the Director of Student Support and Experience is a core member of the Committee to intercept any Policies and/or Procedures that have not been given appropriate Equality and Diversity consideration. This allows the process to be mainstreamed through the Policy and Procedures committee and allows for more staff to be involved in discussions on equality issues. All policy authors are encouraged to forward the completed EAs to the Policies and Procedures Committee for monitoring and publication.

The EA process is linked to the Business Planning process, and it was agreed an EA exercise is carried out on any activity that will have an impact on the workforce of the College i.e., restructures/redundancies. Human Resources will continue to review the latest round of Business Planning involved with any appropriate activities agreed in the cycle from the beginning, to ensure equality consideration is given throughout the whole process.

Along with best practice across the sector the EA paperwork is outcome focused and creates a meaningful document through which the College activities can be viewed and assessed. The current plan will ensure that we are back on target within the next 12 months with a live and on-going EA calendar capturing new projects to be reviewed across College. The outcomes of the completed EA's form part of area action plans, if applicable, to ensure actions are completed to provide equal access to our services.

EA's have been carried out on:

- Academic Misconduct Policy
- Access to Retirement Benefits Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedure
- Anti-Bribery Policy
- Career Break Policy
- Staff Computer Usage Policy
- Code of Practice – Freedom of Speech
- Procedure for Dealing with Health and Safety Issues in College
- Financial Assistance for Further Education Students
- Flexible Working Policy
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Health and Safety Assessment Request Procedure
- Policy relating to the Health, Safety and Welfare of Learners in Work Related Learning and Placements
- Laptop and Mobile Device Policy
- Lone Working Procedure
- Maternity Policy
- Menopause Policy
- Staff Occupational Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Offsite Trips and Visits Policy
- Overtime Procedures for Business Support staff
- Paternity leave Policy
- Probation Policy
- Professional Learning Policy
- Recruitment of ex-offenders Policy
- Redeployment Policy
- Redundancy Avoidance Policy and Procedure
- Redundancy Procedures

- Risk management policy
- Shared Parental Leave Policy
- Stress – Prevention of Work-Related Stress Policy
- College Vehicle and Driver Policy
- Whistle blowing Policy.

The impact of EAs on these policies has been to amend and highlight the commitment the policy has in adhering to equality and diversity ethic at college. No concern has been recorded from any EA conducted.

Embedding Equality and Diversity

- into the Curriculum and Personal
Development and Welfare

9 EMBEDDING EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE CURRICULUM AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE

The College has a strong structure for supporting and monitoring teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) through various processes including observations, learning walks, centre reviews. There is a robust process in both FE and HE that has a programme of TLA developmental activities and peer observations to support staff in the development of their practice.

Across college there is evidence of promotion of equality and diversity through posters, tutorial Moodle, student induction week and enrichment programmes which covers aspects of Equity and Diversity which were embedded in the cross-College tutorial scheme of work e.g., Black History Month, World Aids Day, Lesbian, LGBTQ+ Month. The College had a clear focus on delivering Sexual Harassment and Consent workshops. There was a clear focus on Mental Health and Wellbeing raising awareness amongst students as well as providing support and 1-1 sessions with Kooth and Lancashire Mind. Work experience opportunities have enabled students to work with a diverse range of cultures for example Health and Social Care Cadets completing work placement hours at Royal Blackburn Hospital.

Since the beginning of the academic year, the Safeguarding team has supported students with the reporting of sexual harassment, abuse and violence. The College has provided targeted support and intervention to identified groups to address this issue and educate in healthy relationships. The College has invested in the Student Assistance Programme which gives students 24hr access to a qualified Counsellor.

The Safeguarding team has also supported students with:

- Emotional health and wellbeing
- Peer on Peer abuse
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Obsessive behaviours
- Eating problems
- Personality disorders
- Self-harm and suicidal feelings / experiences

Welfare and Pastoral Support is effective including access to Chaplaincy guidance and the use of prayer rooms and inter faith-related facilities.

Staff training is essential on safeguarding and available for all staff both online and face to face. The classroom-based workshops enable colleagues to identify the risks and threats of radicalisation and extremism. The College reviews and evaluates the training regularly to ensure the content is current and relevant to the FE/HE sector. The College Safeguarding Practitioner has completed specialist themed Prevent training and is the only external agency currently invited to attend. Clear structures are in place, including a DSL, Operational DSL, Deputy DSL and a nominated Safeguarding Governor.

The 'Prevent' duty is explicit in ICT policies and procedures and ICT monitoring identifies inappropriate usage and safeguarding issues/risk taking behaviour. ICT monitoring alerts are received and assessed in 'real time' by the College Single Point of Contact (SPoC) and contribute to work with partners and external agencies for additional support, information and intelligence. In addition, the college now has a Prevent lead to support activity around this key priority.

External safeguarding partnerships are strong, including engagement with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), the Lancashire Prevent Group and the Lancashire Channel Panel.

The College has a good and effective approach to promoting personal development, behaviour and welfare. The learning environment is harmonious, students pay attention and work independently in lessons. Personal development tutorials are structured and focused on transferrable skills aimed at

employability and independence. There are good opportunities for work preparation and experience in the College's real work environments and students in many curriculum areas value and benefit from good and meaningful work experience that improves their vocational skills and their understanding of the demands of employment. This was recognised by Ofsted in their visit in January 2022.

Safeguarding and pastoral care are highly effective at supporting students in building self-confidence and awareness in staying safe and provision to support the development of independent skills in High Needs students. Fundamental British Values are promoted across the College through the vehicle of shared 'College Values'. The College values framework has been mapped to fundamental British Values to ensure that it meets the needs of Blackburn College students and links with the local community.

Excellent safeguarding and pastoral support interventions build confidence and self-awareness, and ensure that those most at risk are able to remain at College and achieve their qualifications with support and guidance.

The tutorial framework provides wide-ranging and motivational opportunities for students to engage in themed activities including employability, national days, religious festivals, volunteering, progression and College/British values. Students have access to effective tutorials that focus on personal and emotional development and enable students to develop a broad range of skills, including self-confidence, resilience, self-awareness, reflection practice, critical thinking, enterprise, effective communication, and how to relate to others and integrate into the local community. Events to Support the Personal Development Tutorial Programme have been:

External speakers/companies are invited in to support the PDP topics, to inform, motivate and engage.

- British Values
- The Skills Network
- Odd Arts (Healthy Relationships) – various events held over the year
- GO2 (Drug and Alcohol service) – open event
- Safe Drive, Stay Alive
- Radicalisation
- Sexual Consent
- Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism
- County Lines
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Online modules (Side by Side) are used to strengthen tutor input on Radicalisation/Extremism, Staying Safe Online, Critical Thinking and British Values, including apprentices who record their achievement in OneFile.
- Kooth
- Re-Align Futures -Wellbeing Champions Course
- Lancashire mind -Drop ins / Mindfulness sessions.
- Trans Awareness- speaker
- National Coming out day - Kevin Bazeley guest speaker - Kevin Bazeley joined the RAF in 1985 and served as a Navigator on transport aircraft at RAF Brize Norton during the first Gulf War & later on anti-submarine aircraft at RAF Kinloss. He was administratively discharged in 1995 following his outing as being homosexual.
- S.O.P.H.I.E Lancaster Foundation- Hate Crime

Students benefit from a range of enrichment activities including the introduction of an LGBTQ+ support group which has been established, external guest speakers, educational visits and workshops which promote healthy lifestyles (including sexual health), personal (including online) safety, and emotional development, and help them make informed choices about healthy eating, fitness and their emotional and mental well-being.

Apprentices also receive tutorial sessions covering key college induction topics and they have been provided with Moodle access to materials on Prevent, British values, safeguarding and employability skills.

The LGBTQ+ tutorial week incorporated Brook from the 'Everybody Centre' supporting Personal Tutors within their tutorial session. Brook delivered a total of 11 tutorial sessions over a 2-week period with feedback being positive from both staff and students.

Although mental health remains the main concern; this is particularly linked with the anxiety and the impact on families to young people, a number of cases included mental health needs manifested in either attempted suicide/suicidal ideation, self-harm and personal safety or were directly linked to domestically abusive relationships.

The College supports Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Experienced. There is a broad range of reasons and therefore risk factors associated with the young people that are looked after, including full and interim care orders. In addition to monitoring welfare and engagement, the safeguarding team have attended statutory care reviews and Personal Education Planning (PEP) meetings. The PEP (for pre-school to age 18) is an evolving record of what needs to happen for looked after children and Care Experienced to enable them to make expected progress and fulfil their potential.

Self-Assessment of Performance (SAR)

It is best practice for areas of the College to report on equality and diversity matters when writing their self-assessment against the Education Inspection Framework. This can be improved to ensure all areas report on robust data and activity to provide a holistic view from centres. A brief summary of key points from the self-assessment are:

- There is a strong commitment to equity and diversity which is well understood by staff.
- Good progress in developing the culture of the College.
- Academic staff are supported to ensure equality and diversity are appropriately covered although there remains variability in practice and not all aspects are fully embedded.
- Outstanding facilities and resources meet students' needs.
- Excellent links with a range of partners to support the equalities agenda.
- The Single Equality Action Plan will bring the Single Equality Scheme 'to life' and make it a more manageable working document looking at the key actions to be addressed on a yearly basis.

Student Support

The Additional Learning Support teams work provides support for students with a learning difficulty, disability or medical condition. A student's individual support requirements are assessed and an appropriate personalised support package, ranging from the application of reasonable adjustments to a detailed support package is implemented.

Further Education

Inclusive delivery is the fundamental difference between Blackburn College and other FE providers. At the College's Ofsted Inspection (January 2022) provision for High Needs Learners was graded "Good".

We provide a broad range of Study Programmes, with personalisation being at the core of our offer. Our Supported Internship is tailored to meet the needs and aspirations of our students. This programme is specifically designed to support students with an EHC Plan to aid their participation and become independent citizens who positively contribute to their local communities by gaining meaningful employment.

Destination data showed 98.5% of students supported by the Additional Learning Support Team progressed to positive destinations including further study, higher level study or employment/voluntary roles.

At the College's Ofsted Inspection in January 2022 the High Needs provision was graded 'Good'. High Needs students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and are in receipt of additional support funding paid to the College from their home local authority where their support costs exceed £6,000.

Higher Education - HE Disability Services including Emotional Health and Wellbeing

The Higher Education Disability Services team liaised with 505 students who had disclosed a learning difficulty/disability or medical condition and 118 were supported (where they met the Disabled Students' Allowances eligibility criteria) to become claimants for this support funding.

The Advisors were able to offer remote support to students, which has developed current practice with some students preferring telephone/on line contact.

The feedback from students accessing the HE Disability Service was extremely positive and below are a couple of relevant extracts:

- 94% of respondents would recommend the service to students.
- 94% of respondents felt comfortable with the adviser, and that there was sufficient time to discuss their requirements.

Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIM)



Blackburn
College



10 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT MEASURES (EDIM)

The College's Equality and Diversity Impact Measures for 2023-2024 are:

Student Equality Objectives

In summary, of the four Students Equality Objectives which formed part of the Single Equality Action Plan, the College's Performance Indicator updates are as follows:

Learner Equality Objectives	22/23 Position / Key Actions		2023/2024 Update
1. FE - 16-18 Students White British	87.4% (5.4% difference from Asian, Bangladeshi, South East Asian Students) Target: Narrow gap to 3% <	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Forensic monitoring of performance and timely interventions. ○ Academic Skills Coaches and Attendance Monitor involvement. ○ Student Pastoral Team Involvement where appropriate through AT Risk Process. 	White learners 16-18 to date: Achievement – 90.7%. (+3.3%PP) Asian, Bangladeshi, South East Asian learners 16-18 to date: Achievement – 93.8% Difference 3.1%
2. FE - Student Apps 16-18	71.4% Female Achievement (9.2% difference from Male Students) Target: Narrow gap to > 5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Forensic monitoring of performance and timely interventions. 	Female learners 16-18 to date: Best case achievement 71.6% Male learners 16-18 to date: Best case achievement to date – 65.4% Current difference 6.2%. Nicola Cunningham to confirm final position?
3. HE - White British Students	62.2% (6.9% difference from South East Asian Students) Narrow gap to 5% <	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Forensic monitoring of performance and timely interventions. ○ Academic Skills Coaches and Attendance Monitor involvement. ○ APP Officer 	White Learners HE: Achievement 62.8% South East Asian Learners HE: Achievement 70.5% Current difference 7.7%

Learner Equality Objectives	22/23 Position / Key Actions		2023/2024 Update
		involvement where appropriate through AT Risk Process.	
4. HE - Male Students	57.8% (8.7% difference from female students) Target: Narrow gap to 5% <	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Forensic monitoring of performance and timely interventions. ○ Academic Skills Coaches and Attendance Monitor involvement. ○ APP Officer involvement where appropriate through AT Risk Process. 	<p>Male Learners HE: Achievement 54.3%</p> <p>Female Learners HE: Achievement 62.7%</p> <p>Current difference 8.4%.</p>
5. HE - Students with a declared disability	61.5% (3.3% difference from students without a declared disability) Target: Narrow gap to 2% <	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Forensic monitoring of performance and timely interventions. ○ Academic Skills Coaches and Attendance Monitor involvement. ○ APP Officer involvement where appropriate through AT Risk Process. ○ HE Disability Services Support. 	<p>Student with declared disability: Achievement 60%</p> <p>Students without a declared disability: Achievement 60.4%</p> <p>Current difference 0.4%.</p>

All the learner equality objectives are being closely monitored and reported on via the Performance Quality Summits which are chaired by the Principal.

Workforce Diversity Objectives

In summary, of the four Workforce Diversity Objectives which formed part of the Single Equality Action Plan, the College's Performance Indicator updates are as follows:

Workforce Impact Measures	2022-2023 Position	Key Actions	2023/2024 Update
<p>1. Promote and raise awareness through a calendar of scheduled events for celebrations of EDI focused themes for both staff and then students through delivery in tutorials and enrichment, including but not limited to LGBTQ+ history month, Black History month, Religious Celebrations, Mental Health, Disabilities, Hate Crime.</p>	<p>As an organisation we have made significant progress in terms of celebrating and incorporating EDI themes throughout 2022-2023. We introduced an LGBTQ support group for staff and students. The college were represented at Blackburn Pride, staff and students also celebrated Eid as a college in Beacon Centre.</p>	<p>To raise awareness and confidence of staff to discuss and educate students of different EDI themes to promote respect, tolerance and acceptance.</p>	<p>The college plans to celebrate EID and other religious festivals within the year with both college staff and students. Blackburn Pride is being promoted across the college community by the student union. The Inclusion department have ran a number of SEND and Inclusion awareness events throughout the year. The Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator has ran a number of mental health support activities throughout the year for both staff and students.</p>
<p>2. To ensure a comprehensive inclusive process is in place to ensure the college gives every opportunity to promote inclusion throughout its recruitment processes</p>	<p>The proportion of staff with a declared disability is 8.64% which is comparable to the previous year (8.59%) – we have staff with a range of disabilities and work proactively with them to implement reasonable adjustments to enable them to remain in work. This year 24 managers have undertaken safer recruitment training and we are in the process of implementing an online module to widen access to this training.</p>	<p>To promote confidence and cultural awareness and support to those affected by disability in the workplace including “invisible disabilities such as Fibromyalgia and Mental Health.</p>	<p>The proportion of staff with a declared disability was 9.61% which is slightly higher than the previous year (8.64%).</p> <p>The College continues to welcome and support staff with declared disabilities, investing in occupational health support and the College Employee Assistance Programme.</p>

<p>3. Continue to foster greater recognition of being an inclusive College that celebrates diversity</p>	<p>The college are committed to supporting staff and students with a number of EDI topics/themes. There have been many training events that have taken place including ASSIST to support staff with having difficult conversations around suicide, a number of staff are now qualified to be able to respond to suicide incidents as a Suicide First Aider. Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism and Sophie Lancaster Foundation to support staff and students around Hate crime.</p>	<p>With the use of CPD, staff wellbeing time staff events that not only address students but staff can also access support groups, guest speakers, that can address difficult topics such as local White supremacy and how to deal with that, hate crime, Mental Health discrimination</p>	<p>The college is committed to supporting an inclusive culture within our staff and student body.</p> <p>We ensure key messages and themes are picked up in both student tutorials and also as part of the OD CPD menu.</p>
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Progress Update on Single Equality Scheme



11 PROGRESS UPDATE ON SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

This part of the report provides an overview of the work that the College has undertaken in relation to the Single Equality Scheme, in order to meet the requirements of legislation relating to all protected characteristics (if information is available) namely:

Race, Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Belief, Age and socio – deprivation.

The Single Equality Scheme three year action plan and the annual Single Equality action plan addressing key targets on an annual basis.

Progress update on protected characteristics

Race

- We actively collect student data about all aspects of a student's journey from admissions, success data to destination and use this data to ensure that everyone has been given the opportunity to achieve and there are no significant achievement gaps with minority groups.
- The use of non-stereotypical images in all our materials produced and the use of images that promote a positive understanding of different cultures and racial groups.
- The annual awareness raising and celebration of cultural and religious festivals within the College.
- The use of positive action, as appropriate, to encourage a wide range of applicants for both employment positions and courses.

Disability

The College has maintained comprehensive and robust data on the disabilities of students and staff collected through the enrolment and the recruitment processes and is able to respond appropriately to their needs. We have an excellent Student Support Team who have seen a year on year growth in the numbers of students that they are able to support. Students making declarations are supported for success from application to achievement.

The impact of learning support is very positive on the student experience and, consequently, students with a disability and/or learning difficulty perform as well or better than those without. We have well established screening and diagnostic testing practices which aim to identify any additional learning support students may need to enable them to succeed on their course

The use of texting and ProMonitor commentary across student services regarding attendance and library services has benefitted all students including students with disabilities.

We have reviewed and evaluated our recruitment procedures, methods and associated documentation and started to implement an improvement action plan in consultation with staff groups and in line with good HR practice.

Some students are offered Individual Study Programmes in order to access mainstream curriculum.

The Disability Officer for the University Centre and the Support Coordinators write an annual report evaluating access to curriculum, quantifying numbers of students accessing support; tracking retention and success and identifying key issues which have presented barriers to learning. These reports are integrated into the School self-assessments and Business Support area self-assessments.

The College continues to be a 'disability confident' accredited organisation and actively adheres to the criteria under this accreditation. The College is working towards achieving the 'mindful employer' kite mark and proactively ensures the College has a health and wellbeing programme in place.

The College has a range of specialist teams to support learners with complex difficulties including

emotional and behavioural difficulties, Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

The College has self-selected in place for staff to ensure they update their own personal diversity data confidentially.

Bespoke Equality Objectives are in place in relation to student and staff disability disclosure and achievement.

Gender

We promote an inclusive culture of mutual respect in relation to gender. We do not tolerate gender-based harassment. We remove barriers and actively encourage inclusive participation in traditionally gender specific job roles, job levels and curriculum areas and levels, within the parameters of the law.

Overall, participation rates between male and female students are broadly the same. However, efforts to promote gender balance in some areas of the curriculum must continue as highlighted in the College Equality Objectives. We are committed to dealing swiftly with any gender related concerns students may have and our learners regularly report feeling safe at college.

We collect robust data concerning the gender of our staff, both permanent and temporary, and will continue to analyse it on a yearly basis to ascertain the impact of our actions to date.

The College ensures that all staff, regardless of gender have equal access to training, promotion and other aspects of career development. Where issues are identified through our impact assessment, we will consider positive action measures to address any gender imbalances or other issues.

The College ensures that all staff are treated fairly in relation to caring responsibilities and will work with staff of any gender that may need to work flexibly in order to meet these caring responsibilities to find a solution that meets the needs of the individual and the College.

Creation of toilet facilities within the Pavilion that do not direct gender as to create 'genderless' toilets for inclusivity and a facility to support non-binary and transgender students.

We are committed to ensuring through our transparent recruitment processes that the differing levels of senior management are well represented by both genders

Positive action initiatives are in place to ensure access to management development programmes is in line with succession planning.

We have specific overarching College four-year Equality Objectives in place on creating a workforce reflective of the community which includes gender balance in STEM subjects.

Sexual Orientation

This is an area that has been proactively addressed by the LGBTQ+ champion in place. The College has been represented at key community events such as Preston Pride to raise awareness to future staff and students. The College mandatory training addresses sexual orientation however, we are conscious more work needs to be done in this area.

The College has provided resources for the establishment of a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender+ (LGBTQ+) group which will provide a confidential and safe support mechanism for LGBTQ+ staff and students. This group will be seen as a support network as well as an advisory and consultative group for the College.

The College has had a particular focus on disability and sexual orientation, this has taken the form of

specific student networks, celebratory and inspirational events and speakers and a focus on the rights and responsibilities of others to make the College an inclusive place for everyone. Activities have included celebrating LGBT+ history month, a particular focus on homophobic bullying during anti-bullying week. This is an area that will continue to be a focus for the College moving forward.

The College has received feedback following our submission into the Stonewall workplace index on a number of actions that the College will take to improve the work it does to promote LGBT+ issues and provide an environment that is inclusive and positive about sexual orientation and become a Stonewall member.

Staff sexual orientation information regularly requested for different monitoring purposes and staff surveys to ensure the variety of staff employed are involved with College activities/processes.

Launched specific LGBT+ training for personal tutors

The College has worked in partnership with Brook to launch their LGBT+ group which is promoted to students. The College LGBT+ champion works proactively with staff and students to raise awareness of key LGBT+ events.

Age

Age information is captured by HR for statistical Equality and Diversity analysis as part of the recruitment process. This information is not part of the selection process and is removed from applications before short-listing.

Government priorities and funding agendas clearly differentiate between the needs of young people and those over the age of 19 and this does lead to different levels of provision and support for different age groups. Barriers to access for adult learners have been minimised as much as possible through effective usage of hardship funding, and we have a commitment to supporting all students, regardless of their age, in their learning and career progression.

The College positively encourage the interaction and involvement of mixed ages, to break down barriers and enrich experiences.

We create opportunities for all staff to have a voice and work with staff to develop excellent professional development and progression opportunities to evolve their careers, irrespective of their age.

The College act firmly to eliminate any unfair behaviour arising from differences in age.

The College's HR policies reflect this commitment and do not discriminate on the grounds of age in our recruitment and selection or progression processes. We actively encourage the full commitment and contribution of all staff regardless of age

Following the removal of the Default Retirement Age (DRA) in 2011, there are currently 13 staff who are aged seventy or above

Our adult learners reach the high levels of success experienced by our younger students.

Religion and Belief

The peace place faith rooms are available in college open to all faiths and is proactively used by staff and students. Student Voice also encourages philanthropy and fundraising, raising the awareness of a variety of causes including discrimination and disadvantage and the benefits of volunteering. Students have proactively raised funds for various charities.

Student Voice also works on bullying and has anti bullying information on the Moodle page. Student Voice helps to promote fair trade, human rights issues, has investigated extremism and as well as challenging negative beliefs and stereotypes. Also, cross College students worked with the chaplaincy to hold Eid celebrations.

The College celebrates religious, cultural and other festivals throughout the year and will ensure that students and staff are provided with an understanding and appreciation of different religions and their contribution to our society.

The chaplaincy service not only provides advice and guidance but works with us in promoting and celebrating the diversity of religions and beliefs within our community.

The College held workshops on dealing with 'the Islamic faith' during staff development days to ensure maximum attendance by staff.

By operating an inclusive culture and providing opportunities for individuals of all faiths to contribute to the whole college it is envisaged that positive perceptions will be encouraged, and the diversity and breadth of the College community celebrated.

The College will encourage and support students and staff to challenge prejudice, stereotyping and intolerance, and will manage the environment in a way that maintains every individual's dignity and rights.

The College promotes learning and understanding between religions. We will act firmly to eliminate any discriminatory behaviour arising from differences in belief. We will work to secure respect for beliefs, faiths and religions and welcome all of them equally.

The College offers opportunities for students to engage in debate and discussion on key faiths and similarities.

The College offers a respectful and value-based curriculum that promotes social and moral development. Also, we offer information to staff on major faith activities such as Ramadan and Hanukah.

Improved data on the profile of religious belief by students and staff helps us develop our services, with a distinction between cultural identity and actual religious practice.

We have improved community cohesion in some our religious communities.

We have a Policy on religion and belief for staff and students to highlight the College role and responsibilities

Social Deprivation

The College, and any agency it contracts with, does not discriminate against any individual on the basis of their background: as students who may be poor or who do not have a job. Criteria are based on possession of appropriate skills to undertake the course, or employment.

The College will encourage and support students and staff to challenge prejudice, stereotyping and intolerance, and will manage the environment in a way that maintains every individual's dignity and rights.

The College positively encourage the interaction and involvement of people from different social backgrounds, to break down barriers and enrich experiences.

Students in receipt of hardship related financial support tended to out-perform students not in receipt of such benefits.

Through the College's student recruitment and progression teams we actively engage with individuals and communities from areas of socio-economic deprivation, the use of positive role models in the form of both staff and students helps encourage underrepresented groups into mainstream provision at the College.

The expansion of the college's HE provision has been specifically targeted at local people who would otherwise not engage with higher level study.

The College has a large Apprenticeship programme with elements targeted at NEET young people and young people from deprived areas. The programmes give young people real job opportunities and help to break the cycle of unemployment prevalent in the local community served by the college. Since 2010 we have supported close to 3000 young people into work through this programme.

The College provides a number of support mechanisms including financial support mechanisms for students suffering socio-economic disadvantage, these support mechanisms are intended to support the retention of students by enabling financial support for travel and course materials. In addition, the College operates a free breakfast offer for students that come to college without having consumed any food and prevents the knock-on effect this can have in terms of retention and concentration.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

We are committed to treating civil partners in the same way as married people in employment and training. Any benefits given to married employees will also be offered to civil partners, including flexible working, statutory paternity pay, paternity and adoption leave, health insurance and survivor pensions.

All of the College's policies and procedures recognise same sex partnerships and marriages and afford same sex couples the same rights as heterosexual couples.

Shared Parental Leave Scheme

The College has excellent and well-embedded processes to support staff and students who are pregnant or have recently given birth. For instance, we allow time for ante-natal appointments and care, carry out risk assessments to ensure the environment is safe in relation to new and expectant mothers. Flexible learning and working arrangements are available for new and expectant mothers in consultation with personal tutors (in the case of students) and with line managers in the case of staff.

We have a robust approach to pregnancy and maternity discrimination and harassment that tackles unwanted attention and unfair behaviours and promotes a culture of respect. We have a well-developed curriculum and tutorial programme that positively promotes understanding and equality of pregnancy and maternity.

An effective working relationship with local agencies and institutions that will allow us to train and support staff and students.

A fully developed approach to equality in employment and career progression that takes into consideration the needs of new and expectant mothers.

Community Cohesion

We proactively engage in community cohesion in many guises including the following:

- Regular debates on current affairs and world politics via student union events.
- The promotion of inter-cultural and inter-faith debate and dialogue.
- Working closely with the local Trans support groups to access our services.
- Working with community centres to promote the College as an employer with over 70 different occupations that can be offered.
- Working with the mosques and madrasas to promote the College service.

- Working with the Police and the Council to raise awareness on hate crime in the borough.

The impact of this activity is the continuous positive presence in the community to promote the college as an employer and provider and also link in with community current issues to ensure the college responds to the needs of the changing community. Our quality processes are robust and continually motivate all within our community to improve. Self-reflection and review processes embedded within our quality systems incorporate attention to equality and diversity matters where appropriate.

Widening Participation



12 WIDENING PARTICIPATION

Blackburn College continues to have a strong track record of access for under-represented groups to its higher education provision. Social mobility, fair access and widening participation continue to be fundamental to our vision. We continue to excel at reaching and attracting students from the more disadvantaged postcode areas. 60% of students in the University Centre at Blackburn College were recruited from disadvantaged postcodes (Polar Quintile 1) which is on par with the previous years.

The College actively embraces its role to promote educational opportunities for all, including those who have not traditionally accessed education and training. Working with the Job Centre Plus team and providing short courses to engage adults back into education has proved highly successful supporting over 2000 students enrolled on a variety of programmes.

The College continues to involve stakeholders at all levels in developing its ability to promote equality of opportunities and has increased the involvement of its students through The Students' Union, and Student Representation cycle via student events and activities, likewise through the well-established Personal Tutorial and Student Engagement Model. The College has led regional and national workshops on community cohesion and has been consulted by ministers and government agencies.

Close links with local agencies ensures support is available in cases of child protection, forced marriages and disrupted lives.

The College has a strong tradition of developing innovative Widening Participation programmes. Widening participation, the active promotion of equality, the support for diversity and cohesion are central to our vision.

The University Centre's Access and Participation Plan (APP) will be focusing on a big challenge in HE generally in reducing current variations in Access, Student Success and progression (into employment or further study) for a range of under-represented and vulnerable groups. The many factors involved are often magnified for the residents of Blackburn. However, we are confident of our ability to create, and are committed to effecting, substantial improvements in relevant measures across the groups identified in our APP document, over a five-year planning horizon.

Key Commitments

To improve positive destination rates for students from areas of deprivation Quintile 1 and 2 and students from low participation neighbourhoods by 2025. New 2025-2029 Access and Participation Plan to be submitted to the OfS by the 1st October 2024.

To increase the rate of positive destination for students declaring a disability to be above sector averages

The College's Outreach activities continue to provide excellent support for a range of schools and disadvantaged populations via a wide range of initiatives such as mentoring and tutoring, the Summer Schools, Open Days and student volunteering. The admissions team measures its impact where practicable. It is seeing an increasing number of applications from pupils who, previously, had attended an Outreach event.

The Student Engagement Team strive to work with and provide support to specific cohorts of students who may not have had opportunities available to them previously in terms of their educational progression and employment prospects.

Key objectives of the current Widening Participation strategy are:

- Continue to respond to local needs, in terms of both an employer-responsive curriculum and flexible, accessible and high-quality study opportunities.

- Building better outreach partnerships - Children's University themed events, extended schools' liaison, community liaison, including work with key local charities.
- Specific support for retention and success – a dedicated HE service to support the success and retention of our students targeted to each academic school.
- Researching and developing a peer mentoring system with a particular focus on male students;
- Making a significant contribution to internal progression curricula and fostering better internal partnership working.
- Ensure opportunities for international learning experiences are created and are accessible to all students.
- Further develop STEM specific Access routes into HE.

A new retention and intervention process to be fully implemented. The aim being to maximise early intervention and support at the earliest possible opportunity to ensure the right outcome for each individual. This process involved all academic and support staff.

The Students' Union also continues to work closely with students with regards to student voice, building on the student community and cohesion.

Student Support

Student support across the College continues to be a success, going from strength to strength with each team working collaboratively to support students in all areas of provision. Introductory talks are carried out during enrolment and welcome sessions during induction help to identify to the students the 'wrap around' support package on offer from across the College. Some examples of the support areas are Student Engagement Team, Students' Union, Student Finance and Careers, Counselling, HE Disability Services, Health and Wellbeing.

The Student Engagement Team and Emotional Health and Wellbeing Officer also attend tutorials across the Centre in the first term to promote their offer and remind students of the 'wrap around' support on offer. This is also repeated for the January intake of students, including a 'refreshers fair' which covers new starters in January and a refresher for existing students.

The support services drop-in sessions continue to be a success. Students' well-being and mental health continues to be supported and work undertaken with external agencies.