



# **Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2019 – 2020**

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## 1. Introduction

This report demonstrates how the Bedford College Group (BCG) is meeting the public sector general and specific equality duties, and provides evidence that we show due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Fostering good relations between different groups
- Advancing equality of opportunity.

Our main documents for driving improvements in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are:

- Single Equality Scheme and action plan;
- Self-Assessment Reports and Quality Improvement Plans.

## 2. Embedding equality and diversity into the Bedford College Group

Governors and leaders have an active involvement in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. EDI updates are discussed at the Executive and monitored by the Board.

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

- Chaired by a Vice Principal;
- Identifies priorities and challenges practices and development of EDI, in particular where progress is limited or in support of underrepresented or disadvantaged individuals or groups.

### Equality Impact Assessment

- The impact on groups of people, especially those with a protected characteristic, is considered in our policy development and the improvement of accommodation and facilities;
- In 2019-20 we assessed and reviewed the following policies for their impact on groups of people in relation to the protected characteristics: HE Student Transfer, Short Course Qualifications, Social Media, Disciplinary policy, Professional Development and Observations of teaching and learning.

### Diversity Ambassadors

- We have embedded an EDI champion model throughout the College;
- The Diversity Ambassadors act as a 'catalyst' ensuring that EDI issues are discussed and kept high on the agenda in every department.

### Staff Diversity Forums

- We have continued the support for the LGBT+ staff forum and Women's staff network, which have provided a sounding board for college improvements in relation to trans inclusion, gender-inclusive toilets, support for women from minority ethnic groups and menopause;
- We have laid the foundations for two more cross-college staff diversity groups: disability and ethnicity;
- We have developed the role of **Executive Sponsors** and senior leaders have been identified to act as EDI champions for disability, ethnicity, LGBT+ and women.

### EDI Standards for Curriculum Areas

- We have developed standards to aid managers and practitioners in teaching areas to provide an inclusive learning experience;
- The standards provide an internal benchmarking for cross-college consistency.

## **EDI Information, Materials and Support**

- A comprehensive EDI information hub on the staff intranet;
- Developed a system for monthly diversity updates through the Connect and Quality newsletters, and via the Diversity Ambassadors;
- Online support forums for the Diversity Ambassadors and staff diversity groups, especially invaluable in continuing the communication and support during the months of lockdown.

## **EDI Professional Development for Staff**

- A mandatory training module 'Positive about Equality and Diversity' for all new staff;
- EDI training and support tailored to the needs of different roles: for Personal Achievement Tutors (in Tutor Essentials), for new teachers (in Teacher Toolkit), for Course Managers, and for curriculum teams (in Golden Hour);
- Training sessions in the area of additional needs, for instance, specific support strategies for low hearing or reduced sight, using radio mic and other support equipment.

## **Guidance Materials on Connect for Staff during Lockdown**

- Avoiding bias in teacher-led grading
- Inclusion for remote workers
- Supporting learners remotely
- Supporting students and staff during Ramadan
- Talking about race and violence in the news
- Personal support for black colleagues and students
- Support for looking after own well-being, and so on.

## **Opportunities for Learners to Develop their Understanding of EDI**

- In induction, tutorials and enrichment activities and celebrations of key dates from the diversity calendar e.g. Black History Month, World Mental Health Day, World Religion Day, LGBT History Month, and Women's International Day;
- LIVE Talks, TED-talk-style events, which gave students from across the College a chance to hear experts and well-known faces share personal experiences and challenge students' perceptions of the world. Topics included: Mental Health Resilience, Knife crime and Gangs, Democracy, Fire Safety, Alcohol Awareness and LGBTQ+.

## **Support and Interest Groups for Learners**

- LGBTQIA+, Trans, Black Culture Club and Disability awareness have ran across a number of College campuses;
- The Black Culture Club responded to the Black Life Matters movement with a social media campaign engaging 137 students in a recommended read and watch list;
- The Q Agenda group delivered projects and activities e.g. a LGBTQIA+ badge project relaunched themed badges with a slogan representing gender and LGBTQIA+ issues. The group worked with the national charity Stonewall to support their education campaign by hosting a photoshoot and a rainbow laces day in Sport, Public Services and Outdoor Education. One participating student said:

'Just being able to meet Stonewall staff and hear how they have progressed and how they have developed a progressive attitude inspired me to do the same.'

## **LIVE Wellbeing and Life Skills Sessions for Learners**

- Topics included Alcohol and Drugs, Mental Health, Body Image, Confidence and Self-esteem, Stress and Anxiety, and Fitness and Wellness;

- During the physical closure since March, the wellbeing and life skills sessions moved onto our social media channel. The LIVE team developed a number of mental health, wellbeing and staying safe messages and videos;
- The wellbeing service supported 396 students with mental health first aid and wellbeing issues, with a clear increase in Apprentices and HE students accessing the services during the lockdown. 519 students signed up for an online positive mind-set campaign;
- The common rooms and wellbeing zones at the Bedford and Kettering campuses had started the year well with an average of 450 students a week using the service, up to the closure in March. One student said:

'I have just ended my first year at Bedford college and I truly feel that if the support I had access to wasn't there, my college experience would've been very different. I have received continuous support from the LIVE team staff [...] It is reassuring to know there is someone I can contact when I am struggling...[.] I'm very grateful to have this regular contact as lockdown has been difficult for me.'

### **EDI Related Projects and Tasks in Individual Subject Areas, for instance:**

- Using Nelson Mandela's speech to explore rhetoric and the concept of prejudice and segregation. Learners considered the implications of this and how the same kinds of attitudes manifest in our society today;
- Exploration of The Handmaid's Tale and the concepts of gender, objectifying women's bodies, ageism, the power dynamic between males and females and how this is reflected in the society;
- Using extracts from the novel Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children to explore the concept of disability and the pejorative and reductive way that those with disabilities can be treated by society, as well as the obstacles faced on a daily basis;
- Functional Skills learners looked at a series of texts that explored the concept of poverty and the impact that it has on opportunity and life progression;
- Using an extract from The Kite Runner to look at issues of religion, class and ethnicity and the different ways that discrimination can manifest itself at the intersection of these identities;
- Creating an LGBT+ window display using recycled or unused coloured plastic wallets and inspired by the work of LGBT+ artists.

### **Support and Guidance for Learners with Specific Needs:**

- Learners from a disadvantaged background were identified early in their journey at the college (e.g. care leavers, with additional learning needs, on low income, needing mental health support) so that the Personal Achievement Tutors can tailor their support;
- The counselling support for learners was not consistent due to limited resources, however recognising the importance of this services as part of our support for mental health well-being, the counselling services in Tresham is operational again;
- The Careers team adhered to their Code of ethics making sure that the service was accessible to users with different needs e.g. developed resources for bursary and UCAS application with voice over and QR codes, tailored the service to those in care or leaving care, young mums, and learners with additional learning needs.

### 3. Performance against our equality priorities (2018-2022)

This section of the report summarises the progress against our equality measures.

The College Executive approved a Race Equality Action Plan (2020-2023) in August 2020 which is in addition to the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan (2018-2022).

#### **Equality objective 1: Improve headline achievement rates for disability and ethnicity**

1. Improve achievement for learners with a disability on full-time programmes to reduce difference to no more than 1% in comparison to achievement of learners with no disability

Outcome: In 2019/20 the achievement gap between learners with a disability and no disability was reduced to -1.7% (from -2.6% in 2018/19).

2. Improve achievement for High Needs learners so there is no difference in comparison to achievement for full-time 16-18 learners

Outcome: In 2019/20 the High Needs learners had a better achievement in comparison to the rest of the cohort on FE programmes including maths and English, and this positive outcome has been sustained since the previous year.

3. Improve achievement for learners from minority ethnic groups on full-time programmes to reduce different outcomes by ethnicity to no more than 4% between the White British and the individual ethnic categories

Outcome: In 2019/20 the FE achievement gaps between the aggregated minority ethnic groups and the White British have reduced in comparison to the previous year (for Black learners by 1.9pp, and for learners from a Mixed ethnic background by 2.3pp). By individual ethnicities, the groups with a wider achievement gap than the equality measure of -4% were the Bangladeshi and the Black Other ethnic group (gap for both at -6.4%), followed by the Mixed Other (-4.1%) and the Mixed White and Black African ethnic groups. (-4.2%).

4. Improve timely achievement for apprentices from minority ethnic groups to reduce different outcomes by ethnicity to no more than 2% between the White British and the individual ethnic groups

Outcome: In comparison to the White British, the only substantive achievement gap was for learners from the Mixed ethnic group at -2 %, although the small number of learners from a minority ethnic background in apprenticeships makes conclusions for individual ethnic groups not viable.

#### **Areas for improvement**

In apprenticeships, review process and systems for identifying additional needs and how these needs are supported in the College and in the workplace. Consult learners from minority ethnic groups to identify areas for development in study programmes and workplace experience.

Review the effectiveness of mental health support for all learners: counselling, mental health first aiders and mental health hub for learners.

Implement a system in curriculum areas for sharing of good practice in diversity, inclusion and equity of outcome across the BCG. Provide evidence from EDI audits, self-assessment and performance reviews, observations of teaching and learning about the level of effectiveness and consistency of the embedding of EDI across all teaching areas.

### **Equality objective 2: Ensure the safety and well-being of students across all protected characteristics**

1. The rates for recorded bullying incidents are comparable for all protected characteristics.

Outcome: The results from student surveys (Student Union snapshot survey Jan 2020 and survey May 2020 of students from a minority ethnic background) and monitoring of bullying incidents indicate that the instances of identity-based bullying were rare, however teachers and other staff did not consistently challenge comments or jokes that would make people feel uncomfortable.

2. The rates for disciplinary actions (academic and behaviour) are comparable for disability-no disability, ethnic groups, and males-females.

Outcome: At top level, the recorded disciplinary actions by disability, gender and ethnicity were broadly proportional with the overall student demographics for these protected characteristics; for FE, there was a small over-representation of males and learners from the Mixed and Asian ethnic groups, and some disproportionality in individual departments.

3. The student satisfaction rates for feeling safe, as evidenced through student surveys, are comparable for students across all protected characteristics.

Outcome: The student feedback from student surveys shows a good level of satisfaction for feeling safe, and being treated fairly and with respect. Overall, the BCG is perceived as a welcoming and friendly place towards all learners regardless of who the people are or where they come from.

### **Areas for improvement**

Improve teachers' and pastoral staff competence and confidence to recognise and challenge comments / jokes / banter that is racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, disablist etc, and how to use such instances to promote positive attitudes towards inclusion and diversity.

Establish a system to communicate to the College community about how the BCG has dealt with bullying, prejudiced behaviour and complaints, and how campus practice has been improved as a result.

Work with individual departments where disproportionality in disciplinary actions is identified to investigate reasons for disparities and upskill staff and leaders.

### **Equality objective 3: Improve the data monitoring of our workforce to ensure advancing equality of opportunity**

1. 95% of all staff records on iTrent are with completed personal information section incl. the 'prefer not to say' option.

Outcome: 100% of staff have provided either some or all their personal data, including people who have opted out for specific individual characteristics e.g. for sexual orientation or religion.

2. The staff recruitment stages (application-shortlisting-interview-offer) are monitored for the range of protected characteristics.

Outcome: We have developed a system to monitor the recruitment stages which allows to capture recruitment patterns for the protected characteristics and to identify trends.

3. The staff exit reviews are monitored for issues in relation to the protected characteristics.

Outcome: The exit review is in development in order to include tools for identifying trends and potential issues in relation to EDI.

### **Areas for improvement**

In order to produce better workforce reports:

For new staff, include completion of personal details on iTrent (self-service) as a requirement in the probation;

For existing staff, work with Heads of Department and Directors to allocate time in staff development days for staff to update their personal details on iTrent.