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BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD

CURRICULUM, QUALITY & STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

1st February 2024

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Report

1.0 PURPOSE OF PAPER
For decision

1.1 To provide members with an update on Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Borders College is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all, and creating a culture that respects and celebrates difference. We aim to provide safe, inclusive spaces for our staff, students, partners and visitors where everyone feels valued, welcome and included.

2.2 As a public sector organisation, Borders College has responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This duty aims to make sure that organisations are thinking about how their decisions and policies affect people with different protected characteristics. In order to evidence we have done this, we publish our equality information every 2 years, and prepare and publish equality outcomes every 4 years.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)/ACTION(S) REQUIRED

3.1 Commence the process of mapping the College's Equality Outcomes with National Equality Outcomes in preparation for alignment in 2025.

3.2 Members are invited to approve the progress points noted within 5.1 of this paper

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Borders College is a listed authority in the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. This means that it is covered by the specific duties that help authorities meet the general duty. The general equality duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

• Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.

• Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

• Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

A detailed update was presented to the Board in the previous academic session, this showed the progress Borders College had made in meeting the General Duty and Specific Duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) through both our Mainstreaming Report and the Equality Outcomes Action Plan - Progress from 2021-23 (See Appendix 1).

5.0 Equalities Update

5.1 This section provides a brief update on current context, progress and next steps

- Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion Officer new into post from January 2024.
- Since the Equalities Action Plan was updated in September 2023 all actions under Outcome 3 have now been achieved and almost all actions under Outcome 1 are achieved.
- EDI Officer to engage with all Outcomes Leads who have responsibilities within the Equalities Outcomes Action Plan to ascertain progress of remaining actions since September 2023 Progress Update. Consideration will be given to the maintenance of actions into sustainable practice and planning of next steps and priorities for 2023-25, as outlined in the Action Plan.
- Preparation and gathering of evidence and data for the next mainstreaming report is ongoing.
- Commence the process of mapping the College's Equality Outcomes with National Equality Outcomes in preparation for alignment in 2025.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications in this report.

6.2 Learner Implications

It is anticipated that continued and focussed work, to further enhance our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, will have a positive impact on student retention and success, in particular in relation to protected characteristic groups.

6.3 Staff Implications

Overall staff have demonstrated commitment to the progression and development of equality, diversity and inclusion. Continued and focussed work is anticipated to support staff development and retention, and the climate and culture within the college environment.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications/Equality Impact Assessment

All policies, procedures and strategies at Borders College undergo an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure inclusiveness and to meet legislative requirements.

6.5 Sustainability/Environmental Implications

There are no direct sustainability implications in this report as our work on equality, diversity and inclusion closely aligns with the college's Global Citizenship Strategy.

7.0 RISK COMMENTARY

Legislative & reputational risk if we do not meet duties under the Equality Act.

8.0 CONCLUSION

This paper is to assure the Board of Management that the continued delivery of Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion will be maintained, progressed and embedded within the college.

Hilary Broatch

Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion Officer

24.1.24

Previous Board or College Committee Approvals:

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For publication ☒	**Not for publication** ☐ **If not, why not?**

APPENDIX 1

BORDERS COLLEGE

Regionally Focused – Globally Engaged

Equality Outcomes Action Plan: Progress Made 2021-2023

March 2023

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Intoduction

The following table illustrates progress made towards our Equality Outcomes 2021-2025. Further detail on how we continue to mainstream equality across the rganisation is detailed in the Equality Mainstreaming Update Report 2021-2023.

As at January 2023 we have completed 14/18 actions.

Priorities between 2023-2025 include;

- Developing accessible reporting mechanisms for hate crime and harassment
- Exploring opportunities to further embed equality and diversity within curriculum
- Increasing organismal awareness of the potential impact of unconscious bias across all aspects of business.

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Outcome 1: At Borders College we will reduce gender imbalance in subject areas where there is a gender split of more than 75% (Construction, Creative Industries, Health & Social Care, Sport, STEM)

Outcome Lead(s): Assistant Principals

Indicators:

- Priority actions related to gender imbalance are embedded into operational team working and quality processes
- More individuals from minority genders are recruited to curricular areas and support services
- Improved retention and attainment from students in a minority gender

Action(s)	By	Responsibility	Progress Made	Overall Progress
Embed an annual plan of activities within the curriculum to inform, inspire and engage students about issues relating to gender segregation (e.g. inspirational talks)	Apr 2023	CLMs	• EDI support and training featuring lived experience has been delivered across college teams, leading to greater organisational awareness of equalities themes/issues and how to address them. • Enterprise Roadshow hosted in Nov 2022 included a focus on female entrepreneurship. • Equalities calendar supports the coordination of monthly EDI events/campaigns. A cross-college working group drives this activity. • Recent organisational changes have aligned equalities more closely with curriculum • Equalities Officer scheduled to attend CLM meetings throughout the year to provide input on EDI. • Global Citizenship strategy and college-wide 'respect' campaign launched in Oct 2022. • Inspirational speakers from industry are a regular feature of vocational curriculum areas, e.g. hair and beauty, construction.	

			• Andy's Man Club have hosted information sessions on multiple campuses to raise awareness for men's mental health.	
Address gender segregation in all promo and outreach	Apr 2022	CLMs, Head of Marketing	• Case studies and news articles used regularly within college promotion, as detailed in mainstreaming report. • Borders Menopause Café was launched at Borders College October 2022 in partnership with NHS Borders.	
Take positive action in recruitment to attract gender minority applications to curricular areas and support services	Apr 2025	Recruiting Managers, Director of People Services	• Managers to receive unconscious bias training during AY 2022-23, including how this can impact on recruitment • An independent review of the college's recruitment processes is currently underway.	

Develop pilot mental health student input	Apr 2022	CLM (STEM), Director of Student Services, Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer, EDI Officer	Throughout the student induction period, the college's mental health team delivered a range of wellbeing sessions to students across the college	

Impact

- **78** staff and students attended Andy's Man Clubs sessions in 2022. Sessions have resulted in disclosures of poor mental health. We understand that several students have accessed support through Andy's Man Club as a result of their input.
- The college has seen good representation of women in male-dominated pursuits, e.g. female students winning awards in Godolphin Stud and Stable staff awards and Lantra. A female downhill mountain biking student featured on the Adventure Show.
- **85** responses to Menopause Café consultation. The initiative is receiving positive comments from the local community on social media, and sessions are well attended. The café is having a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of those who attend. Some people have shared that it has made them feel less alone, less isolated, and more understood.
- Enterprise events have played a role in raising the profile of local female entrepreneurs.
- College Awareness calendar has ensured EDI themes are explored and promoted every month at Borders College including a combination of physical events, online campaigns and newsletter/newspaper articles.
- Inclusive Recruitment Review launched Oct 2022. Recommendations will support improvements to our processes where required.
- On the whole, withdrawal rates of male and female students have remained steady over the past 3 years at an average of **11%** for both groups. However, in curricular areas with high levels of gender segregation females are more likely to withdraw than males. For example, construction courses have an average

withdrawal rate of **19%** for female students compared to **13%** for male students over the past 3 years.

- On the whole, the gender gap in the curriculum at Borders College is reducing. Over the last 3 academic years Construction, Creative Industries and STEM have all observed a year-on-year increase in under-represented genders. Construction has seen a **5%** increase in female students, Creative Industries has seen a **2.5%** increase in male students and STEM has seen a **2.7%** increase in female students. Sport and Outdoor and Early Years have also demonstrated an upwards trend in respect to gender segregation with more students from underrepresented gender groups in 2022-23 than 2020-21.

Next Steps

- Continue to raise awareness of equalities themes
- Re-visit the opportunity to set up peer support groups for gender-specific issues, i.e. menopause and men's wellbeing
- Address recommendations from recruitment review
- Longer term, the College should address unconscious bias within learning and teaching, including work to decolonise the curriculum. We do not anticipate this work can be achieved within the remit of the current action plan. However, we can start laying the groundwork in terms of increasing understanding of unconscious bias and gently introducing the concept of anti-racist curriculum under the auspices of Global Citizenship.
- Ensure all leaders receive unconscious bias training and evaluate impact of training on approaches to recruitment.
- In certain curricular areas, the number of students preferring not to disclose their gender identity is increasing. The College should continue to monitor these trends and consider interventions, i.e. trans awareness training, where appropriate.

Outcome 2: At Borders College, we will improve diversity disclosure rates to better support and reflect the diversity of our workforce Outcome Lead: Head of HR

Indictors:

- Improved disclosure rates across protected characteristic groups
- More individuals recruited to the college from protected characteristic groups
- Improved staff awareness of how to support colleagues with protected characteristics

Action(s)	By	Responsibility	Progress April - Sept 2022	Overall Progress
Review recruitment and induction processes to identify barriers for staff from protected characteristic groups and implement recommendations	Apr 2023	Director of People ServicesE DI Officer	• Induction review completed April 2022. All recommendations accepted by SLT. Projects now underway, including changes to delivering compliance and the introduction of a staff welcome day. • Recruitment review underway - currently working with 'Apt' to review the inclusiveness of Borders College recruitment processes. Apt is a public social partnership designed to reduce the disability employment gap.	
Address unconscious bias through delivery of training and awareness raising activities	Apr 2022	Director of People Services	• Planned delivery in 2022-23 as part of newly developed college-wide leadership programme.	

Deliver EDI training for all line managers, including targeted support for LGBT+	Apr 2024	Director of People ServicesE DI Officer	• An newly developed inclusive leadership programme will be delivered to all college leaders which will cover: - Understanding Equalities Law - Managing Mental Health in Ourselves and Others - Achieving a Culture of Psychological Safety for Improved Performance - Inclusive Leadership for a Contemporary Workplace - Leadership Techniques for a VUCA Environment - Using Cognitive Psychology to Develop Colleagues and Encourage Effective Decision Making • Ongoing support continues through delivery of bespoke EDI training sessions and advice and guidance as part of new 'Ask Me Anything' drop-in initiative for CLMs.	
Review EDI focus in staff induction processes and training modules	Apr 2023	Director of People ServicesE DI Officer, VP Finance	• Review of staff induction complete	
Identify and address barriers to staff engaging in non- essential equalities CPD	Apr 2023	Director of People ServicesE DI Officer	Training provision has been reviewed and now includes: • Equalities information available on the staff portal • A range of informal CPD events e.g. online and through L&T forum • EDI training to be delivered at away days. • External training opportunities shared regularly	

Impact

- Disability disclosure remains steady since 2021 at **8%.** This compares well with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) national college staff data which was **6.7%** for the year 2020-21.
- LGB disclosure has slightly improved since 2021 from **1%** to **2**%. No staff members have disclosed transgender or non-binary identities. The recent census results in England and Wales has estimated that approx. **3%** of the UK population have disclosed LGB identity and **0.5%** identify as trans.

- The average age of staff has reduced since 2021 from **49** to **47** years old.
- The disability pay gap at Borders College is **7.48%.** This is lower than the national disability pay gap, estimated at **13.8%** in 2021.
- Feedback on the Inclusive Leadership programme is positive with many attendees stating that their confidence and understanding of EDI issues has improved as a result of attending.
- Feedback from inclusive recruitment review was positive. A number of recommendations will be considered, including application for a SUSE workplace award and the completion of an accessibility review of website and online recruitment processes.
- Staff have engaged in a range of training including Dyslexia Awareness (**8** attendees), Tourette's Awareness (**16** attendees), Menopause Awareness (**98** attendees), Trans Awareness (**27** attendees), Gender-Based Violence (**29** attendees)
- Lived experience training to continue into 2022-23 with trans awareness sessions booked for Creative Industries staff in 2022-23. The College is actively seeking trainers from diverse backgrounds to provide input on unconscious bias in 2023.
- Staff induction guidance document created in line with new induction process.

Next Steps:

- Evaluate impact of inclusive leadership training programme
- Continue to track disclosures of protected characteristics year on year
- Adopt recommendations from inclusive recruitment reviews and monitor impact on disclosure
- Run a staff campaign to encourage disclosure across protected characteristic groups
- Deliver a programme of all staff equalities training that aligns with the content of the inclusive leadership programme

Outcome 3: At Borders College, retention and success rates for protected characteristic groups are close to the average of the student population Outcome Lead(s): AP (Q&D)

Indicators:

- Improved retention and success rates for students in protected characteristic groups
- Improved retention and success rates for SIMD
- Robust Equality Impact Assessments completed
- Improved accessibility across college services and facilities

Actions(s)	By	Responsibility	Progress April - Sept 2022	Overall Progress
Review accessibility of college communications, services and facilities, including renewed accessibility audits of all college campuses	Apr 2025	Director of Facilities, Student Funding Manager, Director of MIS, Director of Student Services, BCSA Support Officer, EDI Officer	• EDI committee to approve opting into the breastfeeding friendly scheme • College exploring the creation of a multi-purpose quiet zone for students who are neurodivergent/experiencing mental health issues • Introduce baby changing facilities across campuses • Welcome sessions for students were delivered in person, live streamed and shared on student portal	
Develop staff guidance on addressing EDI issues (e.g. supporting transgender students)	Apr 2022	EDI Officer	• Draft transgender guidance complete for approval at equality and inclusion committee • EDI Officer and transgender students delivering LGBT awareness training to department teams. • Accessibility guidance developed and published • Newsletter articles providing advice and guidance on EDI themes.	

Develop initiatives to combat issues that have a disproportionate impact on particular groups e.g. food insecurity, mental health	Apr 2022	Students' Association Support Officer, Director of Student Services, EDI Officer	• Menopause café to launch on World Menopause Day (18 Oct) • Supported enrolment provided accessible, quiet spaces for students to get 1-1 support to enrol and learn more about the college. This project was supported by a team of disabled students. • Exploring the introduction of a Borders College Food Larder to combat food poverty. • Mental health team running workshops designed to support students with their wellbeing, resilience, coping strategies etc.	
Develop EDI dashboard to enable ongoing monitoring of protected characteristic groups	Apr 2022	Director of MIS, AP (Q&D), EDI Officer	• Complete – meeting MIS Team to receive additional training and to review and refine information displayed • Quality manager regularly reports to Equality and Inclusion and Learning and Teaching Committees on success and retention of protected characteristic groups.	
Conduct diversity audits of course content and teaching and learning plans	Apr 2024	AP (Q&D), Quality Improvement Manager	• Teaching and learning audit of Moodle content took place. Reported at teaching and learning committee in Oct 2021. • Equality audit calendar in place for 21/22 with annual audits taking place across all areas. This includes a desktop audit of equality and diversity.	
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Impact:

- Equality Impact Assessments reviewed at Equality and Inclusion committee and published in full on the college website.
- Transgender guidance for staff has been published – this was developed in partnership with trans and non-binary students
- Proposal for Quiet Zone was approved by Equality and Inclusion Committee. This was co-created by neurodivergent students. Currently identifying suitable space.
- Supported enrolment helped over **60** students enroll on a Borders College
- **158** students attended Welcome Sessions during Week 1 of term with **116** online streams – many of these are likely to be full classes
- Student FAQs developed based on audient Q&A, providing greater accessibility for information in relation to funding, mental health support, food poverty and other issues important to students.
- Success and retention of Protected Characteristic groups remains a challenge. Students who live in the 10% most deprived areas have the highest level of early withdrawal (**16%**). The second highest early withdrawal rates are studnets who are care experienced (**8%**) followed by those with a disability (**5%**).
- There has been a good level of engagement with cross-college campaigns and activities, including MenTalk and Brit Challenge.

Next steps:

- Provide ongoing support to staff to complete equality impact assessments – develop short online training video as a reference point.
- Launch Quiet Zone
- Build on the success of support enrolment/quiet induction
- Work closely with the Students' Association to provide supportive interventions for students facing the most significant barriers
- Continue to develop and deliver cross-college events and activities to improve wellbeing.
- Explore opportunities to address resilience and student wellbeing as embedded within the curriculum.
- Review accessibility across campuses

Outcome 4: At Borders College, staff and students will feel more confident to report hate incidents and harassment
Outcome Lead(s): Director of Student Services

Indicators:
- Improved awareness and analysis of student experience in relation to safety and inclusion
- Improved student and staff awareness of hate crime and support available
- Improved student and staff uptake in accessing support

Actions(s)	By	Responsibility	Progress April - Sept 2022	Overall Progress
Collect and analyse student feedback related to hate crime through existing student consultation processes	Apr 2023	Students' Association Support Officer, EDI Officer	• Analysis complete.	
Explore opportunities to improve accessibility of reporting processes, including implementing a report and support tool	Apr 2025	EDI Officer, Director of Student Services, Student Services Team Lead, Learning Support Manager, Mental health & Wellbeing	• Exploring opportunities to integrate anonymous reporting into 'one stop shop' helpdesk support • Develop anonymous reporting tool in the interim for Student Portal • Working with Scottish Borders Rape Crisis to consider ways to create closer links to the service for students on campus • Police Scotland campus visits taking place • Borders Women's Aid to host monthly drop-ins open to staff and students.	

		Officer		
Develop an Equally Safe action plan to address violence against women and girls	Apr 2025	EDI Officer, Director of Student Services, Student Services Team Lead, Learning Support Manager, Mental Health & Wellbeing Officer	• EDI Officer delivered GBV sessions with student advice and mental health teams • College representatives attend 'Fearless Edinburgh' group • Working with Rape Crisis to deliver GBV training to staff	
Develop equality themes for each academic year including campaigns, training and awareness raising	Apr 2023	EDI Officer, BCSA, Director of Student Services, Marketing Manager, Student Services Team Lead	• Respect campaign: staff/student respect video released Nov 2022. • WelcomeFest – an inclusive freshers event that was well supported by a range of local support organisations which had a positive impact on disclosure. • Conducted consultation as part of planning for Menopause café • Welcome sessions and online student induction provided opportunities for staff to share key messages on our approach to equality and inclusive and Global Citizenship • Monthly themed Wellbeing Cafes are planned	

			throughout the academic year, each focusing on a different awareness topic. External organisations will be in attendance.	

Impact

- Student GBV survey completed – **37** responses
- WelcomeFest promoted greater disclosure of GBV through accessibility to specialist services – **12** disclosures
- Engagement with menopause café consultatoin: **285** engagement, **21** shares, **85** responses, **91%** respondents identified a need for more menopause support in the Scottish Borders.
- **158** students attended Welcome Sessions during Week 1 of term with **116** online streams, many of which were likely to be full classes
- **41** groups of staff and studnetds participated in ‘respect’ video

Next steps:

- Complete Equally Safe action plan
- Develop and launch online hate reporting tool
- Continue to plan activity around equality themes each month
- Re-issue hate crime survey in 2023-24