

Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee

29 May 2025

Mental Health Strategy Update

1.0 PURPOSE OF PAPER

For decision

- 1.1 To propose an alternative and more streamlined approach to evidencing Borders College's commitment and progress in supporting student mental health, by replacing the standalone Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy with a one-page mapping document that integrates current activity across several existing frameworks.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following a review of the College's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for students, and discussion at Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee, a discussion ensued as to whether there remains a need for a separate strategy document.
- 2.2 The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has since confirmed there is no specific requirement to produce a standalone mental health strategy. Instead, the Scottish Government encourages participation in the Think Positive initiative and the development of Student Mental Health Agreements (SMHAs).
- 2.3 Given this, it is proposed that the College move forward by developing a concise mapping document that demonstrates the breadth of current activity and outcomes related to student mental health. This document would highlight and integrate the Equality Outcomes, Self-Evaluation Action Plans (SEAPs), and the SMHA, thereby improving transparency, increasing efficiency, and reducing duplication.
- 2.4 This approach has been discussed and agreed in principle by the Equality and Inclusion Committee, with the next step being formal drafting and presentation to the Committee for approval.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)/ACTION(S) REQUIRED

- 3.1 Approve the proposal to retire the standalone Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 3.2 Endorse the development of a one-page mapping document integrating current mental health activity.
- 3.3 Agree that the document will be reviewed and monitored via the Equality and Inclusion Committee.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The College's previous Mental Health Strategy did not have a defined review timeline; however, as outlined in a previous update to the Committee, all actions have now been completed and are 'business as usual' or reflected in other strategic frameworks.
- 4.2 Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee raised the question of whether the strategy remains the best method to represent mental health work.
- 4.3 SFC clarified that there is no formal requirement for a strategy or action plan and that actions can be addressed via other planning tools, particularly through the National Equality Outcomes.
- 4.4 The Scottish Government's Student Mental Health Action Plan instead encourages institutions to engage with Think Positive and Student Mental Health Agreements.
- 4.5 A mapping approach was discussed and supported by the Equality and Inclusion Committee as a practical and effective solution.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

Potential savings on time and resources associated with developing and maintaining a detailed strategy document.

6.2 Learner Implications

A more coherent and integrated approach could lead to improved outcomes for students by streamlining efforts and focusing on what works.

The approach strengthens alignment between EDI, student engagement and the College's self-evaluation and quality improvement frameworks.

6.3 Staff Implications

Reduces duplication of work for teams responsible for self-evaluation, equality planning, and student support, and supports more effective cross-departmental collaboration around shared student mental health goals.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications/Equality Impact Assessment

Mental health support is a key element of the College's Equality Outcomes.

6.5 Sustainability/Environmental Implications

The proposal supports sustainability through reduced resource usage (fewer large documents, streamlined reporting).

7.0 RISK COMMENTARY

This is a low risk approach which aligns with national guidance and avoids the burden of maintaining a separate, potentially redundant strategy.

Potential risk in perception of reducing focus on mental health can be mitigated through strong communication of the integrated approach and commitment via SMHA and EDI plans.

Governance risks are addressed through continued oversight by the EDI Committee.

8.0 CONCLUSION

This proposal offers a proportionate, effective, and strategic response to evidencing the College's work on student mental health. By adopting a one-page mapping document and focusing on existing national and internal frameworks (SMHA, SEAP, and Equality Outcomes), the College can demonstrate a continued commitment to student wellbeing while improving internal efficiency and governance.

Approval is sought to progress with this new approach.

Amy Brydon

Director of Student Support Services

09/05/2025

Previous Board or College Committee Approvals:

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