

Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee May 2025

Student Welfare and Learning Support

1.0 PURPOSE OF PAPER

For discussion

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide the committee with an update on activity within the Student Support Services team between January 2025 and April 2025.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The college's Student Support Services is comprised of two key elements:
- Welfare
 - Learning Support
- 2.2 To date, **211** students have student support in place and **350** have learning support in place.
- 2.3 **119** referrals for wellbeing support have been received to date with the main reason for referral being for support with Mental Health.
- 2.4 Over **100** Core 10 assessments have been completed with **35** students presenting with a need to complete a Safety Plan.
- 2.5 Over **50** students have been referred to our funded partnership with Insights Youth for Counselling.
- 2.6 We successfully worked with curriculum and DEBI to deliver a short course for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People. The feedback from this has been positive with **100%** of students retained.
- 2.7 **16%** of students with learning support in place have withdrawn and **11%** of students with welfare support in place have withdrawn.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)/ACTION(S) REQUIRED

- 3.1 We recommend that the Committee agree that the college is making good progress in developing the range of pastoral and learning support available to improve retention and student success.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Student Support Services team provide a range of pastoral support on matters relating to course information, funding, progression and articulation, welfare, health and wellbeing, funding and benefits, and learning support. Some members of the team also have key roles in the coordination of the Schools Academy programme.

5.0 SUPPORT OVERVIEW

5.1 Learning Support

350 students have been flagged as having Learning Support in Place, including **57 (16%)** who have withdrawn. A total of **201** learners requested support at application and after contacting them all individually, **138 (69%)** of them now have Learning Support in place. This highlights the importance of contacting everyone who has disclosed a support need pre-enrolment, so that we can provide the smoothest transition to college and the best start to their course. It also shows the need for support teams to be available and visible at induction and in classes at the beginning of the academic year, since **61%** of the **350** supported learners did not disclose a support need when they first applied.

ProMonitor

There are **425** active contact logs, split as follows:

Business, Computing, Creative Industries	95
Rural Skills, SRA	122
Sport, Health & Social Care	109
STEM and Sustainable Construction	90
DEBI (Evening Classes)	9

Withdrawals

Most of the 57 supported learners who withdrew were facing challenges outside of college which ultimately led to their withdrawal, including physical and mental health, and financial difficulties. All were offered support with learning while at college.

Students aged 15 at enrolment

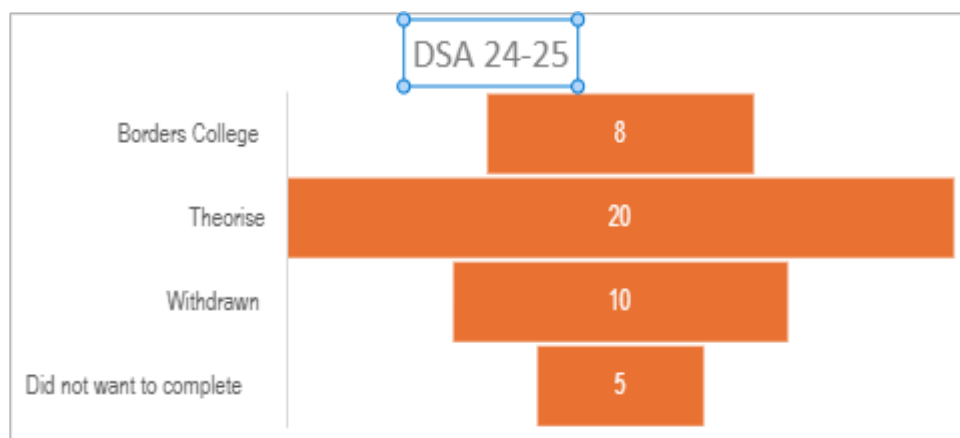
80 students were aged 15 at the time they enrolled. The Learning Support team contacted them all individually to offer a chat about any possible support needs or concerns. None of these students engaged with this support at the time. However, **30 (38%)** of them have subsequently received learning support. Of those, **5 (17%)** have withdrawn.

Care Experienced

The Learning Support team has supported **33** Care Experienced students this year. **6 (18%)** of these students have withdrawn.

DSA

43 students have made DSA applications this academic year.



DSA 22-23	34
DSA 23-24	25
DSA 24-25	43
Predicted DSA 25-26	79

Looking at college applications for 25-26, and students who are likely to progress from their current course, we predict a significant rise in the number of students applying for DSA next year. We are currently exploring ways to increase the number of DSA support hours that we can provide in-house as a means of generating income for the College, since these hours are billed directly to SAAS. The Learning Support Advisors are working closely with the SSO for Higher Education to identify students who could be submitting their DSA applications as soon as possible, so that their support will be in place from the start of the new academic year.

Transitions

Both the Learning Support and Welfare Support teams are heavily involved in transitions at this time of year. We have joint visits to all 9 SBC secondary schools to meet with Guidance and Learning Support staff to find out what support interventions have been in place for pupils who are coming into college. We are working with parents, carers, schools and external agencies to identify students who would benefit from an enhanced transition and encouraging them to visit the college. Our BYT Mentor is also reaching out to any new care experienced students who have offers for next session. Dates have been set in July and August for Quiet Induction and Supported Enrolment sessions.

5.2 Welfare Support

211 students are flagged as having Student Support in Place, compared to **96** in 2023-24. This increase is due to Pro-Monitor being used more effectively for flagging those students with support in place. **23** (11%) of these students have been withdrawn. Of the 211 students we have support in place for, **100** of those students are also in receipt of Learning Support.

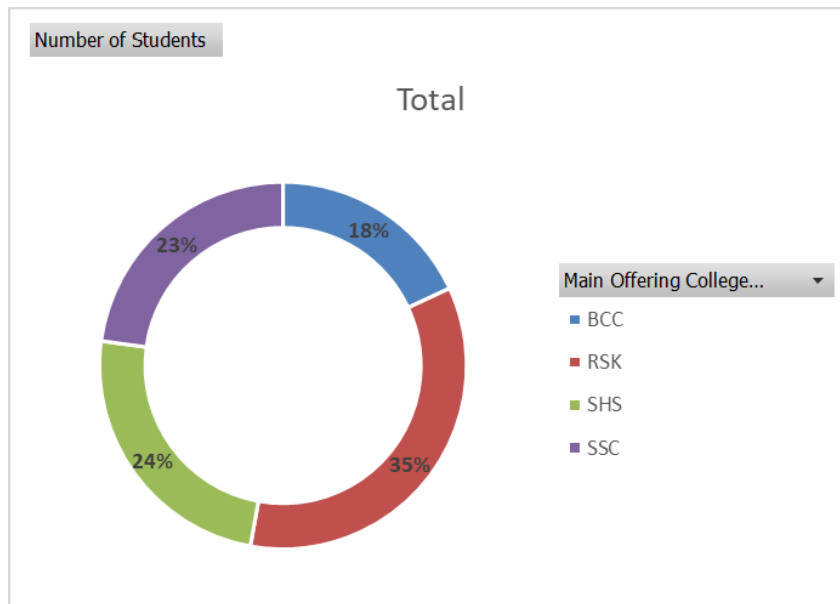
Breakdown across Sectors:

BCC 18%

RSK 35%

SHS 24%

SSC 23%



In the current academic year, we have created **972** logs with over **5000** entries recorded.

Referrals for Support

119 referrals have been received to date with the main reason being for support with Mental Health. Data from our Core 10 assessments shows us that over **90%** present with issues relating to anxiety and sleep. Our Student Wellbeing Co-ordinator will be looking at resources/materials we could use at the start of the session over the summer, and we are exploring opportunities with external organisations to run resilience sessions.

The team have completed over **100** Core 10 assessments with **46** students being referred to External Agencies for support and over **50** students being referred to our funded partnership with Insights Youth for Counselling. There are **35** students who have a student safety plan in place.

Looking at the support this session, the level of need has increased, and the issues that students are presenting with are more complex and require the team to spend time with the students ensuring that we have the most appropriate and effective interventions in place. To help strengthen the support available to staff in responding to the needs of our students, we have continued to offer supervision sessions and are introducing a training programme focused on coaching skills and trauma-informed practice.

Safeguarding

So far, this academic year, we have received **11** safeguarding referrals and **48** causes for concern. The College's Safeguarding Team meets regularly to review each case and ensure appropriate support is in place for the students involved.

Borders College has submitted its first Prevent referral to the Scottish Government's Prevent team. In preparing the referral, support and guidance was sought from the Scottish Borders Council SPOC to ensure it was managed with care, sensitivity, and in line with best practice.

5.3 Schools Academy

We continue to reach out to all pupils with care experience currently on school's academy courses and have started to build relationships and make them aware of current support available to them.

Offers are now out to schools for session 2025-26 to over 600 pupils.

Having a dedicated Schools Liaison Officer in post is working well for the College. They are building up key relationships with Schools, maintaining strong lines of communication and having a contact when Pupils are on campus and supporting Pupils where required.

5.6 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People (UASC)

Student Support, Curriculum and the Department of Enterprise and Business Innovation worked collaboratively to secure LEP funding to run a short course for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

The project aimed to improve educational opportunities for UASC by integrating English as a Second Language (ESOL) support, team-building activities, practical skills courses, and employability workshops. It focused on building skills and knowledge to support the young people to integrate into their new communities and pursue future educational or employment opportunities.

Over the period of 10 weeks, students tried out a range of courses on offer at the college, with ESOL embedded within delivery. There were **9** enrolments to this course, including students from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Vietnam.

55% of the cohort are now enrolled on ESOL courses delivered by the college and transitions meetings have been completed with all students, with potential pathways identified for those interested in progressing to full-time courses. Social workers also shared feedback on the positive impact the course has had on the students' confidence.

5.7 Future Developments

Funding for the Borders Young Talent Programme came to an end in March from the Robertsons Trust after 7 years of funding. We have been able to extend our current support to the end of this academic year with some additional funding from Scottish Borders Council. We have submitted a funding application to the National Lottery which we are awaiting on an outcome from.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

The Scottish Government's 'Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Transition Fund' is supporting our mental health partnerships and the delivery of a student counselling service. We are working with other local partners to plan services for 25-26 which will best utilise the remainder of this funding.

6.2 Learner Implications

A reduction in external funding may have a negative impact on those students who have received support through externally funded projects. Managers are focused on ensuring a smooth transition away from these initiatives.

6.3 Staff Implications

Due to a reduction in external funding, support for certain student groups will be integrated into the broader support team functions. We are actively working to ensure a smooth transition for students to their new support

structures, while also providing ongoing training and development to equip staff with the skills and confidence to support all students.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications/Equality Impact Assessment

Ongoing improvements to service delivery and future plans are focussed on developing a more accessible service for students.

6.5 Sustainability/Environmental Implications

There are no direct implications in relation to sustainability and environment from the contents of this report.

7.0 RISK COMMENTARY

This report provides assurance to the Committee that the college is working to develop the range and quality of pastoral support offered to students, therefore mitigating the risk that students will not be successful on their course.

8.0 CONCLUSION

This paper aims to provide the Committee with an overview of the activity within the student support services team, as well as plans in place to develop the service.

Jen Mackenzie and Jacqueline Nimmo

Student Support Services Managers

24/04/2025

Previous Board or College Committee Approvals:

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