

CURRICULUM QUALITY AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

5 MARCH 2026

Learning Support and Guidance Update

1.0 PURPOSE OF PAPER

For discussion

The purpose of this paper is to provide the Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee with an overview of current activity, demand and developments within Learning Support and Student Welfare and Transitions services. Detailed operational updates are provided within the accompanying appendices.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Student support demand and complexity continue to increase across both Learning Support and Student Welfare and Transitions services. There has been a significant rise in the number of students receiving support, safeguarding activity, and engagement with wellbeing interventions. In response, both teams have adapted their service models to address external developments, maintain the quality of support, manage staff capacity pressures, and support staff wellbeing.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)/ACTION(S) REQUIRED

- 3.1 I recommend that the Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee note the continued increase in demand and complexity of student support across Learning Support and Student Welfare and Transitions services, and acknowledge the work undertaken by both teams to maintain the quality of student support in the context of ongoing operational challenges.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This paper provides an overview of current activity, demand, and developments within Learning Support and Student Welfare and Transitions services. Detailed updates are provided in Appendix 1 (Learning Support) and Appendix 2 (Student Welfare and Transitions).

5.0 Summary Updates: Student Support Services

- 5.1 Across both teams, there has been a sustained increase in student contact, support interventions, and safeguarding activity.
- 5.2 Learning Support continues to provide active, ongoing support to learners, alongside management of DSA provision and adaptations to national process changes.
- 5.3 Student Welfare and Transitions services have experienced increased demand for student and staff wellbeing support, safeguarding, and transition support, with a growing emphasis on early identification and targeted intervention.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

- 6.1.1 Use of Sprot Trust funding has enabled enhanced wellbeing and food-poverty initiatives at Newtown campus.
- 6.1.2 Recruitment of supply staff and in-house delivery of some DSA support offers improved oversight and service flexibility.
- 6.1.3 Planned service developments and training delivery is possible through utilisation of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Funding which has been carried forward from previous years.

6.2 Learner Implications

- 6.2.1 Improved identification of need and earlier intervention supports student wellbeing, engagement, and retention.
- 6.2.2 Enhanced access to learning support, wellbeing provision, food-poverty initiatives, and transition planning benefits students from priority and vulnerable groups.
- 6.2.3 Changes to service delivery models aim to improve accessibility, responsiveness, and the overall student experience.

6.3 Staff Implications

- 6.3.1 Sustained staff absence has placed pressure on capacity and wellbeing.
- 6.3.2 A range of mitigating measures have been implemented to support staff wellbeing and maintain service quality, with changes kept under review and adapted in response to staff and student feedback.
- 6.3.3 Ongoing CPD will support staff resilience, professional practice, and boundary setting.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications/Equality Impact Assessment

6.4.1 Trauma-informed approaches, focus on staff wellbeing and inclusive service design align with EDI priorities.

6.5 Sustainability/Environmental Implications

6.5.1 There are no identified sustainability or environmental implications arising from this paper.

7.0 RISK COMMENTARY

7.1 While demand continues to grow, there is a need to monitor the potential impact on staff wellbeing and service capacity.

7.2 National changes to DSA processes and increased safeguarding activity require ongoing monitoring and adaptation.

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 Student Support Services continue to play a critical role in supporting student access, wellbeing, and success. Despite increased demand and capacity pressures, both teams have adapted effectively and maintained a strong focus on inclusive, proactive and student-centred support.

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Student Support Services Managers

January 2026

Previous Board or College Committee Approvals:

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For publication ☒

Not for publication ☐

If not, why not?

Appendix 1. Learning Support Update

343 students currently have Learning Support in Place

28 students with DSA support in place

Support Overview

There are **418** open contact logs – these are students we have spoken to or supported in academic year 2025/6. Every student contact is recorded, so not all these students have ongoing learning support.

Overview of Contact Logs



The open contact logs are split fairly evenly across all curriculum areas

Learning Advisor



Creative, Enterprise, Technology and Essential Skills	92
Landbased and Rural Skills	112
Health and Social Care, Early Education, Sport and Supported Programmes	114
Applied Construction and Engineering	93
No Enrolment	7

(No enrolment – ‘test’ student profiles for admin/training purposes)

- **343** students have ‘Learning Support in Place’ learner badges. This means they have ongoing ‘active’ support. They have been identified and the badges applied by the Learning Support team.
- **35** of the **343** are Care Experienced (**10.2%**)
- **305** continuing, **38** withdrawn (**11%**)

DSA (Disabled Students’ Allowance)

- **28** DSAs are now complete:
 - **11** referred to Theorise, **17** supported in-house
 - **6** applications sent to Access Centre and awaiting needs assessments

We have partly moved away from using an external agency to provide the DSA support and have recruited a team of supply Higher Education (HE) support staff to boost our capacity in-house. We now have Study Skills Tutors and Mental Health Mentors. Specialist ASD mentoring is still outsourced.

This new service gives us oversight of the student engagement with support. It also allows for dialogue between the support team and lecturers, ensuring that students receive targeted support where they need it most. Appointments are offered online or in-person on campus to suit the needs of individual students.

The DSA process has moved online and changed completely this year for colleges who use an Access Centre for needs assessments. The HE team within Borders College has been involved since the early stages of the new process and we have had to adapt our procedures and react to constant changes and updates. These challenges have been fed back through focus groups and will hopefully help shape new developments to the DSA Online service.

Appendix 2. Student Welfare and Transitions Update

- **15.8%** increase in contact logs created, reflecting rising demand and complexity of student need.
- **136.8%** increase in students receiving support compared to January 2025, demonstrating improved identification and visibility of need.
- **26.7%** increase in students with Safety Plans in place.
- Year-on-year increase in safeguarding activity, with earlier escalation of higher-risk cases.
- Over **27** wellbeing workshops delivered across the College, positively received by students.
- Sprout Trust funding has enabled enhanced wellbeing and food-poverty support at Newtown campus, with strong student engagement and feedback.
- Sustained staff absence since October has impacted capacity; mitigating actions have been implemented to support staff wellbeing and maintain service quality.

Support Overview

Student Support Logs

- **1,009 logs** with **3,839 entries** recorded to date.
- Represents a **15.8% increase** in logs and **9.7% increase** in entries compared to January 2025.

Student Support in Place

- **251 students** identified as having previously received or currently receiving support.
- Increase of **161.5%** compared to January 2024 and **136.8%** compared to January 2025.
- A significant proportion of students fall within priority groups:
 - Learning Support: **101 students (40.4%)**
 - Care-experienced (including care leavers): **81 students (8.3%)**
 - Estranged from parents: **23 students (2.4%)**
 - Students with caring responsibilities: **83 students (8.5%)**
- Work is underway to further develop the '*support in place*' flag to improve data quality and inform service planning.

Safety Plans

- **19 students** currently have an active Safety Plan, up from 15 at the same point last year (**26.7% increase**).

Current Activity

Staff Wellbeing and Service Delivery

- Sustained staff absence since October has increased pressure on capacity and wellbeing. In response to this, management has implemented a range of measures informed by staff feedback, including:
 - Reduced Advice Centre drop-in hours, while maintaining service delivery outwith these times through a triage approach and continued accessibility for staff.
 - Soft starts to the working week
 - More targeted attendance and engagement reporting
 - Informal team connection activities and reflection sessions
 - One-to-one supervision and encouragement of wellbeing time
 - Recruitment of Supply Student Support Officers

Wellbeing Workshops

- **27+ workshops** delivered across College all delivery areas.
- Student feedback highlights:
 - Interactive and welcoming sessions
 - Improved understanding of mental health and available support
 - Value of self-care planning
- Suggested improvements include longer sessions, quizzes, and greater visibility of college support services.

Sprot Trust Funding

- Funding has enabled enhanced wellbeing and food-poverty support at Newtown, including:
 - Weekly lunch club providing hot meals, activities and informal support
 - Wellbeing Wednesdays (soup at lunch) in partnership with BCSA
 - Exploration of pantry-bag support and provision of refreshments in communal spaces
- Student feedback has been positive, emphasising consistency, access to food, and supportive staff.

UCAS

- **58 UCAS applications** submitted (1.8% increase year-on-year).
- **7 SWAP applications**, a **40% increase** on last year.
- Support included timelines, internal deadlines, workshops, drop-ins and class visits.
- A review is planned to improve communication, clarity and efficiency for the next academic year.

Safeguarding

- Significant increase in safeguarding activity year-on-year, with a shift toward earlier escalation:
 - 2023–24: 0 safeguarding / 6 Cause for Concern
 - 2024–25: 6 safeguarding / 36 Cause for Concern
 - 2025–26 (to end January): 18 safeguarding / 18 Cause for Concern

Criminal Convictions

- A new process for managing criminal conviction disclosures has been approved.
- Responsibility will transfer to the Safeguarding Team for 2026–27 admissions, aligning with sector best practice.

Schools Academy

- **439** total enrolments
- Learners with support indicators:
 - Declared disability: **38%**
 - Care-experienced: **4%**
 - Student carers: **4%**
- Average attendance: **78.1%**.
- Revised attendance and tracking information shared with schools has been positively received.
- A Schools Timeline has been developed to support clearer communication and coordination

Future Developments

Transitions Roadshows

- All nine secondary schools have been offered transition sessions delivered by Student Support teams.
- Sessions will be followed by structured meetings with school pastoral teams to support early identification of need.
- Initial engagement aims to be completed by Easter, with follow-up meetings planned for June.
- Transition criteria will be shared in advance to ensure focused, consistent discussions.

Service Developments

- Planned Advice Centre building works to improve staff wellbeing and create a more welcoming, student-centred space.
- Replacement of the Wellbeing Check-In model with a trauma-informed, triage-based approach.
- Delivery of bespoke CPD focusing on coaching skills and trauma-informed practice to support boundaries, wellbeing, and student resilience.