

Access and Inclusion Reporting Template for the period 2020-23

What are the strategic aims and objectives of your Access and Inclusion plan?

The strategic plan aims to meet the further and higher education needs of Dumfries and Galloway, deliver the highest quality learning for our students, to make a positive contribution to the local and national economies and to utilise the expertise of our staff to deliver continuous improvements.

Access for people from the widest backgrounds remains at the heart of the College. We aim to improve life chances in the region by providing an outstanding learning experience regardless of background or starting point on the student journey.

This Access and Inclusion strategy sets out the College's commitment to providing an inclusive environment where students with diverse needs and backgrounds are supported to access college provision; achieve positive outcomes and destinations; and progress towards employment.

Dumfries and Galloway College student retention and success rates are slightly below sector average. We believe that the inclusive and supportive practices detailed in this strategy will lead to improvements in both areas. This strategy sets out how the College will achieve this and how it will monitor its effectiveness and impact.

Have these remained the same, or have they changed? Please provide details.

The strategic aims have remained the same (Vision 2020), but will be changing in 2020 to take the College through to the year 2025.

Please define the inclusive service you will provide for your students.

Student Advisers Service - A key support service for students is a team of Student Advisers. Student Advisers are professional and experienced staff

who can support students with diverse needs. Services offered by the Team are well known and advertised internally so that both students and staff are aware and can use them. The Team works in partnership with all curriculum areas, enabling joined-up working and continuity of support. They have a wide range of skills and experience, such as mental health first aiders; safeguarding; PREVENT; and provide an in-house Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) assessment service to ensure HN students access appropriate support, thus removing the stress of having to travel to be assessed. All college students who state on their application form or enrolment form that they have an additional need will be invited in for a comprehensive needs assessment. This will then be monitored with a member of the Educational Support Team to ensure the strategy planned is still relevant and meeting the student needs. The Team works in close partnership with LGBT and support a growing number of students that are transitioning and coming out who have additional emotional needs. The College also started working with Stonewall during the 2017-18 academic session. Along with undertaking needs assessment, this small team offers, a 'drop in' or by appointment service in which students can seek information, guidance and support on a wide range of issues.

Care Experienced Support - For care experienced students, who have been looked after at home, in residential care, foster care or kinship care, or have been in secure accommodation, coming to college can be daunting. In many cases, a disrupted education or lack of family support may make the transition to college a more intimidating experience for care experienced individuals. The College has a dedicated advisor who can help students access a package of support, be it pastoral, educational or financial. The College is registered with Propel, the charity for children in care and young care leavers, who provide help, support and advice so that young people who spend time in care can unleash their potential and take control of their lives.

Carer Support - The College has a dedicated advisor to support students who have carer responsibilities. The advisor support can offer students:

- sensitive and confidential support on a range of welfare and education issues
- guidance through all the various information and procedures
- practical help with enrolling and settling into College life

- someone to talk to who understands carer responsibilities, particular situations, and needs
- Liaise with tutors on special arrangements to fit round carer responsibilities
- Monitoring attendance and referrals for patterns of absence or behaviour, then find ways to help support carers
- Telephoning carers to make sure they are coping when with their carer responsibilities and their course
- Supporting carers to develop, encourage and support them to achieve.
- Support them with funding advice including external agency funding. The adviser works closely with academic staff to raise awareness of students with carer responsibilities to ensure adjustments are in place as required.

Educational Support - The College is committed to supporting the progression and attainment of all students. The educational support team provides support to students who have an identified need. The team works closely with the student advisor service and curriculum staff to ensure that students receive the support appropriate to the students' individual requirements as well as specific course requirements. The team provide a wide range of support measures and specific resources. A full range of reasonable adjustments to both the physical environment and learning materials may be required to effectively support students. Where a student has an identified need the student advisor service will prepare, in partnership with the student, a strategy of support.

Personal Tutor - It is College policy for all further education programmes to have a one-hour tutorial as part of the programme (this is now shared with Guidance coaches); for access courses this is increased to two hours. The purpose of the tutorial is for students to discuss their academic progress with their personal tutor. It also gives the personal tutor the opportunity to explore any other issues affecting their progress such as poor attendance, funding difficulties and personal issues before they escalate and become more complicated. Early intervention is key to supporting students, and depending on the issues, students can be directed to the student adviser service, Guidance Coaches the Independent Learning Centre (ILC), the Learning Zone or student funding.

Guidance coaches have been employed to support retention. They work closely with student support and guidance, course tutors and teaching staff. They work with the students to identify barriers to attendance, and apart

from working with college staff liaise with external agencies and sign post as necessary

The Funding Team and student support work closely together to advise to advise students on the best way forward when applying for any funding.

The Equality and Diversity Officer works across college to ensure every student has an equal opportunity, and insures all policies and procedures are impact assessed

Transitional Support - For some students the transition from school to college can be difficult. To ease students transition the support starts before they attend college. The Student Support and Guidance Manager attends 'transitional' meetings in schools, along with other agencies, where a Coordinated Education Support Plan is developed for individuals. These meetings enable the College to better understand any particular needs/ difficulties some students may be experiencing, thus enabling the College to be better prepared to help students settle into College life. Attendance at those meetings is vital to ensure vulnerable students move between learning environments with ease. The role the College can take in the young person's future is fully explained to school staff, social work, Skills Development Scotland, the parents, and most importantly the young person themselves, who can talk about their aims and aspirations for the future. The Head of Student Support and Guidance is in discussion with the region's school staff and working in partnership to support school refusers and those on the Autism spectrum. The aim is that with careful transition and support, the young people will eventually manage a full-time college course. The school liaison officer works closely with the feeder schools, teaching staff and the Student Support and Guidance Team. This member of staff has worked in partnership with SDS, and College staff to offer lunchtime activities for winter leavers.

Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting - The Head of Student Support and Guidance is the Safeguarding Coordinator for the college. The Senior Adviser is the deputy safeguarder and together this involves much liaison with staff across the College as well as outside agencies. Cases must be dealt with quickly to ascertain that a young person or vulnerable adult is not at risk, or if they are, action taken to support and help for example referral to an appropriate agency.

Learning Zone/Flexible Access Centre - The College has invested in drop-in IT centres. The Dumfries campus has a 90 computer (including MACs) facility known as the Learning Zone and the Stranraer campus has 26 computers, known as the Flexible Access Centre (FAC). From these centres students can drop-in to access the college network and be supported by trained staff. From the college network, students can access the College virtual learning environment LearnNet, a web-based system where students can access learning resources, online support, work on and submit assessments, and communicate with staff and students through discussion boards and live chat. Centre staff are also ambassadors for the SDS My World of Work. Staff are trained to deliver a range of support such as IT Induction, LearnNet induction, internet safety, study skills, report writing, and organisation skills. Staff within these facilities encourage students to use the facilities and develop their independent learning skills.

Independent Learning Centre - This centre is a dedicated resource to assist students to develop their numeracy and communication skills at SCQF level 1-6. Staff are trained to undertake core skills assessments. Staff in the centres can offer one-to-one sessions or group sessions, depending on the needs of the individuals or referral from academic teams. For some students, although they may have achieved their core skills profile at school, they have poor confidence/self-esteem and benefit greatly from attending on a one-to-one basis or in a small group. Again, staff encourage students to use the facilities and develop their independent learning skill.

Work Placement Meetings - take place between Employability Support Workers and College Staff to ensure the correct support is in place for students with additional support needs. The work placement coordinator then liaises with the department to pass on information to employers who take students on placements. This is vital to ensure success and to make sure the employer has all the information to support the student. The Head of Student Support Guidance (Safeguarding Officer) assists staff in the departments if issues arise in the workplace of a safeguarding nature, or before the work experience can occur (e.g. the need for a risk assessment).

Student Engagement Officer - The College has a dedicated Student Engagement Officer to complement the team who plays an important role in developing the 'Student Voices', the Student Association and Class Representatives. In collaboration with cross-college teams the Student

Engagement Officer arranges a wide range of engagement activities and events, designed to enrich and influence the student experience.

Library The library team play an active role in supporting access and inclusion. The library plays a key role in developing essential skills of literacy, research skills and digital awareness. It provides a flexible space with a wide and inclusive range of resources to support learning and teaching. It offers 'quick reads' as a way to encourage students to develop their literacy skills. It promotes and supports events such as world book day and internet safety. In partnership with the Student Association, the library runs reading clubs with the aim of encouraging reading for pleasure

Access Courses The College provides a number of access level and employability courses targeted to the hardest to reach in our region. These courses meet the needs of students who are not able to enter other vocational education due to a number of issues including:

- Having poor confidence / low self-esteem
- Holding few or no qualifications
- Needing an alternative to school
- Needing emotional, behavioural or learning support
- Have no idea of vocational/career interests

Supported Programmes The College currently offers full time courses and one day-release courses for students with complex needs. There is college wide support and encouragement from staff for students on supported programmes. There is a staff culture that ensures students are given opportunities to be involved in the work and life of the college. Students from these programmes are usually very active and engaging class representatives, albeit with staff support and guidance, and ensure that the student voice is heard. There are some college operational areas/functions offering work experience to the students. Staff delivering on these courses work in partnership with the student support teams, and educational support workers provide group support. All students are given a college iPad as part of their course.

Princes Trust The College also deliver Princes Trust programmes. These personal development programmes enable students to gain new skills, take a qualification and meet new people, and vitally for this group gain confidence. As part of the course, they will also spend time developing interview and CV

skills to ensure they are confident to take the next step. Often the next stop is a full-time college course.

Digital Inclusion and Accessibility The College ICT systems are accessible and inclusive. The College is continually investing in ICT to ensure its infrastructure is future proof to meet the needs of all. Our infrastructure is designed to support 'bring your own device (BYOD)' enabling students to use the devices that are best suited to them, either college owned or student supplied. The College operates the Eduroam secure wireless network that allows staff and students to use their college network accounts, eliminating the need for a wi-fi guest login.

Learning and Teaching Mentors The College has invested in Learning and Teaching Mentors. The role of the peer mentor is to support staff to become outstanding reflective practitioners through the adoption of inclusive practices and methodologies, appropriate use of technology and to develop engaging, flexible, responsive, innovative and blended approaches to delivery. One of the key roles of the mentor is to observe staff in the class and work in partnership with them to develop and implement detailed individual development plans.

College Publicity The College seeks to ensure where possible that publicity and promotion practices target and encourage applicants from under-represented groups. There is careful scrutiny of publicity, promotion materials and marketing related activities to ensure that brochures, leaflets, adverts and display materials reflect the diversity of college students

Please give details of how you currently measure the effectiveness and impact of this service and how you will continue to measure this.

The College has in place a comprehensive system of monitoring and evaluation that will:

- measure progress towards the success of this strategy, including tracking both academic achievement and the long term impact of study on the lives of students, their families and communities;
- enables the college to improve the way we deliver services to our students; and

- enables the college to demonstrate that resources are being spent effectively.

Outline how these funds have been used to support this service and how you will continue to use these funds.

The College strives to utilise our limited student support funds to maximum effect by initially targeting priority groups whilst at the same time endeavouring to provide a full package of support to all students which may include:

Additional Support Needs (ASN)

- Inviting students to undertake Needs assessments and DSA assessments with our Student Advisors Service. Identifying and recommending needs and where appropriate providing additional support towards study and travel related expenses
- Close collaboration between Student Advisors Service and Student Funding Team ensuring applicants meet funding eligibility prior to sourcing accessible equipment and compiling a database of ASN equipment
- Alternative travel requests assessed by College Taxi Review Panel. This Panel comprises Head of Student Support & Guidance, Student Funding Officer and Personal Tutor for Supported Programmes. The Panel meet on a regular basis and assess each application on its own merits. Factors to consider include access to Motability car, government benefits and duplication of funding. In all cases some form of travel support will be provided whether it be shared taxi, mileage allowance or a bus pass.

Care Experienced

- Dedicated Care Experienced Advisor works closely with Student Funding Team when making bursary assessments to ensure that the optimum award is granted in all cases. These are often very complex assessments and involve considerable contact with various external agencies including the Social Work Department. Staff must have an awareness of Equality Act 2010, Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Carers Scotland Act 2016 and up to date training in current GDPR. Staff must also have an up to date knowledge and understanding of current benefits system and be able to promote new benefits to relevant target groups e.g. new Carer's Allowance Supplement and Young Carer's Grant. These grants can be relevant to care experienced students who are also carers. Also students are aware of Care experienced bursary of £202.50 per week.

Vulnerable student groups

Flagged within College online absence recording system, special concessions granted regarding permitted number of absences related to student funding payment. This involves a combined approach of guidance and support from cross College teams with emphasis on the Student Advisor Service and Guidance Coaches who ensure the necessary levels of participation and engagement are still being fulfilled.

Bursary/EMA/Childcare and Discretionary Funding

We need to enable and ensure those eligible for support have access to their full student funding entitlement. Students are offered funding as a package; Bursary/Education Maintenance Allowance/Childcare and Discretionary Funds. Where appropriate additional top-up Trust Funds are granted to make the transition to student life smoother. Whenever possible student support granted at same level for both FE and HE students. Vulnerable groups are prioritised. College reacts to change and reviews utilisation of student support funds each year, trying to remove financial barriers which may impact on the student experience

Bus Service

Due to the rural location of Dumfries & Galloway College free access to local bus service is offered to all eligible full time FE students

Please outline any changes you intend to make to your use of this funding.

As demand for Care Experienced bursary increases any government changes to criteria around this fund will be likely have an impact on spend. Guidance coaches have been employed to assist primarily with retention and inclusion. A huge increase in time supporting mental health issues. This is mainly the student support and guidance team. An increased number of safeguarding referrals which are extremely demanding on staff time.

Please outline who was included in the development of your Access and Inclusion plan, such as Learning Support or equivalent teams.

Student Advisers
Student Association
Rep from Equality and Diversity Committee
Head of Student Support and Guidance
Educational Support
Funding Officer
Safeguarding Co-ordinator
Guidance Coach
Senior Student Adviser
Team Leader Learning Zone/ILC

How are you using these funds to secure a parity of outcome? Please refer to Annex A of the guidance for more details.

Funds are used across College to ensure that all students have an equal chance of achieving their qualification. For example, on our SCQF Level 3

courses every class has a lecturer and at least one support worker in class. Students are taken on an annual residential to improve class cohesion and improve team working and problem solving skills. These transferable skills can then be used in the classroom, providing students with the tools they require to achieve their qualification. We have a Care Experienced and a Carers Plan which provides information on how we plan to approach support for these student groups.

How do these funds support the college infrastructure? Please refer to Annex A of the guidance for more details.

The Student Support and Guidance team provide support to every student in College via Student Advisers, Educational Support Workers, Guidance Coaches and Safeguarding officers. This support allows every student the opportunity to achieve their qualification.

Funds have been used to provide access for students to accessibility equipment such as Reading Pens, Ipads, Laptops, Digital Recorder, Spell Checkers, Posturite Chair, Adjustable Desks and Specialist software

How do these funds support training and development? Please refer to Annex A of the guidance for more details

4 staff are BRITE trained and staff continually keep up to date with developments in technology and equipment by attending CPD events around the country such as staying safe online and assistive technology events.

Inclusive practices such as Needs Assessments, Transitional Meeting, Personal Learning Support Plans, Guidance Coach Meetings, Educational Support in class and Learning Support Assistants are all supported through these funds.

Learning and Teaching Mentors ensure that academic and lecturing staff are implementing inclusive provision for students with additional needs in the classroom using the online recommendations set by the Student Advisers during the students Needs Assessment.

How do these funds support health, wellbeing and student welfare? Please refer to Annex A of the guidance for more details.

Student support funding is often the deciding factor when choosing to enter College education. Recent changes to the government benefits system has resulted in student hardship, particularly impacting on Lone Parents as they move from a Tax Credit system of payment to Universal Credits. Without the provision of these support funds students from low income families would otherwise be in poverty and struggle to pay for the basic costs of living.

Funds are used for staffing hours to promote information days on topics such as drugs, alcohol, money matters and balanced diet. Initiatives such as a free gym membership, lunchtime sport activities and staff badminton sessions are all supported through these funds.

CPD such as mental health first aid, SafeTalk are all funded through these funds and liaising with Youth Justice to ensure students are supported.

How do these funds support working in partnership with other organisations in your region? Please refer to Annex A of the guidance for more details.

Safeguarders support students with mental health difficulties who are in crisis and refer on to agencies as appropriate. This signposting and developing working partnerships involves a large volume of staffing hours which would not be possible without these funds. For example, CPN, GP's, CAMHS, Social Work, schools, care homes and LGBT+

Please outline what proportion of your funding is used for individual support including support for accessing SAAS.

Student Advisers attend Tutorial classes and deliver SAAS presentations which include information on applying and other discretionary funding which students may be entitled to. Staff in the Learning Zone support students completing the SAAS application.

Please outline any additional considerations for AY 2020-23 onwards not included above or in your Outcome Agreement

Care Experienced Bursary now being rolled out to students above the age of 26.
Review of Guidance Coach Situation.
Development of Counsellor Service.
Update library of assistive technology as students requesting Needs Assessments are increasing. Equipment also required for Student Carers to allow flexibility in regards to accessing their Curriculum and allowing remote access from home.
Time to take forward Stand Alone for Estranged Students and Going Further for Care Experienced Students and students who are Veterans.