



Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

Introduction

NPTC Group of Colleges (The College) welcomes the opportunity to publish a Strategic Equality Plan covering the period 2020 to 2024 in line with the requirements of The Equality Act 2010. This act replaced a wide range of anti-discrimination legislation in Britain which had predominately addressed individual equality strands. In addition, the 2010 Act widens the scope of protection to include several additional groups, or protected characteristics as they are now known, not previously covered under legislation.

The protected characteristics covered by the law are listed below;

- Age
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Marriage and Partnership*

* only in respect of the need to eliminate discrimination

The aim of the 2010 act is to strengthen the law, smooth out anomalies and provide clarity for those who need to ensure compliance with the act. In addition, it provides guidance and protection for individuals and groups and for any individual seeking advice on equality issues.

As a listed public body the College has responsibilities under this act to comply with the public sector equality duty, known as the general duty. The general duty has three elements and public bodies must have due regard to all three.

The three elements or 'aims' as they are usually referred to are;

1. To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the act.
2. To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Applying the general duties to the work of the College will aim to ensure we minimise disadvantage, try to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people and encourage people to participate in public life where they are under-represented. Fostering good relations requires us to tackle prejudice and promote understanding between all people.

The act specifically states that meeting this duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

Specific Duties

Wales has taken the equality agenda much further than other nations in the UK with the Welsh Government implementing a set of specific duties which are designed to detail the steps a listed body must take to demonstrate they are paying due regard to the general duty.

These specific duties were introduced to assist public bodies fulfil all three aims of the general duty as it is outlined above. The specific duties are designed to ensure that equality issues are included in policy design and within service delivery and they are:

- Setting Equality Objectives and publishing a Strategic Equality Plan
- Ensuring we engage with people who have an interest in how the College's decisions affect them
- Collecting and publishing information relevant to compliance with the General Duty
- Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and publishing the results if there is a substantial impact on a group with a particular protected characteristic
- Publish employment monitoring information annually
- Promote knowledge and understanding of the General Duty amongst its employees and use its performance assessment procedures to identify and address the training needs of its employees in relation to the General Duties
- Set a gender pay equality objective where a gender pay difference is identified
- Think about including conditions relevant to the General Duty in its procurement processes.

The Strategic Equality Plan and the associated Equality Objectives are in themselves a requirement of the specific duties and one that the College has been working towards for some time. The main purpose of a Strategic Equality Plan is to record in one published document the steps a listed body is taking to fulfil the specific duties. The plan must be publicly available and in an accessible format.

Who are we?

NPTC Group of Colleges (The College) came into existence on 1 August 2013 when Neath Port Talbot College merged with Coleg Powys. It is one of the largest Further Education (FE) providers in Wales in terms of learner numbers, with approximately 12,000 learners of whom over 4,000 are full time. The College employs around 850 staff and has an annual turnover of circa £55million. It covers nearly 30 per cent of the country's land mass. The College offers a large portfolio of academic and vocational courses of both full and part-time courses across its 8 sites to more than 270,000 residents across South to North Wales.

The four main Colleges are based in Afan, Brecon Beacons, Neath and Newtown and the sites at Llandarcy, Maesteg, Pontardawe, and Swansea, provide education and training for almost

every vocational area, including the 6th Form Academy based at Neath College and the outstanding Sports Academy based at Llandarcy.

The College also delivers bespoke training for industry and business in the region and plays a leading role in the provision of community-based learning. The College operates a franchise with Neath Port Talbot Borough Council delivering Adult and Community Learning. On behalf of Powys County Council, the College delivers at many outreach centres. The College is also the lead partner of Skills Academy Wales, one of eight partners and 12 sub-contractors, and holds a commissioned contract to deliver work-based learning programmes across Wales.

The College prides itself on an outstanding quality higher education programme, delivered in partnership with Swansea University, The University of South Wales, University of Wales Trinity St David, Glyndŵr University and Pearsons. It delivers over 40 higher education programmes including BSc (Hons) and BA (Hons) Degrees, Foundation Degrees, HNDs, Diplomas in Higher Education, Certificates of Higher Education, and the Postgraduate/Professional Certificate in Education. The College is now looking forward to expanding this provision even further.

The College is served by two local authorities, Neath Port Talbot and Powys. Neath Port Talbot Borough is ranked 8th on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD 2014) and Powys at the other end ranks 21 out of WIMD 22 areas in Wales. Neath Port Talbot has a population of 142,000 of which 22,200 (25.6%) are economically inactive, 2.3% points higher than the Welsh average of 25.2%. Of those economically inactive 5,300 (23.8%) want to work. Approximately 3,300 adults (4.9%) are unemployed and 24.1% of households are workless. Powys, also served by the College covers a quarter of the land mass of Wales and has a population of 132,500; 2.4% are unemployed and approximately 20% are economically inactive, of these 23% are actively looking for employment. 31% of learners come from areas of deprivation across Neath Port Talbot and Powys. Of the learner population, 9% reside in the most deprived areas and around 4.4% live in the least deprived areas.

Across the College, 52.6% of learners currently enrolled on full time programmes are male, a decrease of 6.4% from the previous year whilst there has been a 7% increase (47.3%) female learners, 0.1% identified as other. The majority of learners (44.5%) are aged between 16-19 and 19% are aged 20 - 29. 77% have identified themselves as white and 5% as BAME. Approximately 5.5% (182) of learners come from Welsh language schools and approximately 13% of enrolled learners have declared a physical and or and additional learning need.

Promotion and Awareness of Equality and Diversity

Promoting equality and diversity is seen as integral to our work with the College's mission statement being:

“Inspiring learning, enriching lives, delivering success”

This is underpinned by the Vision that the College will be:

- A key partner in strategic networks;
- A college delivering excellent teaching and learning;
- An enterprising and entrepreneurial college;
- A college that successfully prepares learners for positive progression;
- A recognised lead in using technology;

- An employer of choice;
- The employers' choice for learning and engagement;
- A college that is helping to tackle poverty by improving economic prosperity;
- A college that promotes Welsh-medium and bilingual learning.

Our College value statements commit us to being 'bound by equity and diversity as our guiding principles'.

Enabling success for all learners through the provision of high quality, flexible teaching and learning opportunities through a broad range of vocational and academic disciplines is the central aim of our work. In addition, we seek to be a responsible employer to our staff, a successful service provider in our commercial enterprises and a committed and enthusiastic partner in our community activities.

Our value statements set out our commitments regarding the approach we take to ensure we meet the highest standards. The College is committed to being;

- Learner and learning centred in our actions;
- Caring and inclusive in our attitudes;
- Responsible and respectful in our behaviour;
- Bound by equity and diversity as our guiding principles;
- Professional and corporate in our conduct;
- Enterprising and innovative in our outlook;
- Tolerant and supportive in our responses.

Our strapline "More than just an Education" conveys that learners will receive outstanding education and training experiences, opportunities to participate in a wide range of extra curricula activities and learner involvement initiatives including the GATE programme for more able and talented learners.

Staff are aware of the role equality and diversity plays through the recruitment and selection process, during their induction, through an online training module and role specific training.

Students address equality and diversity throughout the induction process and during the tutorial programme to ensure understanding. Tutorial content and delivery is reviewed annually and the College gathers student feedback on the relevance and effectiveness of the tutorials.

We seek to maximise all opportunities to mainstream diversity within existing college events and also to attempt innovative ideas wherever possible.

We believe that equality of opportunity is at the heart of all we do and is central to achieving our mission and promoting success for all our students. NPTC Group of Colleges is an inclusive organisation and believes it is essential that all members of the College community

feel valued and able to fulfil their potential. An important element of this vision is that equality and diversity are not separate or additional concerns but central to our College life and work.

How we developed the Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives

In order to ensure our plan was comprehensive, robust and relevant we have been guided at all times by Welsh Government priorities, Equality and Human Rights Commission Guidance and relevant UK legislation.

The College has worked to ensure this plan is both topical and comprehensive by relating it to the aims detailed within the Colleges Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023.

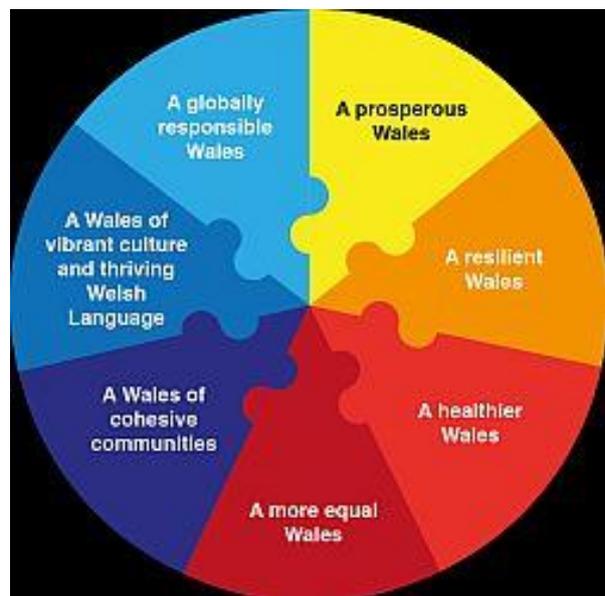
Statistical analysis from the College's Annual Equality Reports has highlighted issues which have been incorporated within several equality objectives in this plan. We have also recognised that aspects of our data collection reveal a low disclosure rate for certain protected characteristics. To rectify this and ensure we move towards a better understanding of the diversity of our stakeholders we have included an objective specifically relating to the improvement of data quality and disclosure.

The College has utilised the Equality and Human Rights Commission themes in the publication 'Is Wales Fairer?' 2018 and the evidence it contains as a significant steering point for our third Strategic Equality Plan. The publication 'Is Wales Fairer' provides a comprehensive review of how Wales is performing on equality and human rights. It offers a challenge to all interested parties and public bodies to address deep seated inequalities and promote equality to everyone living in Wales. The review looks across all areas of life including:

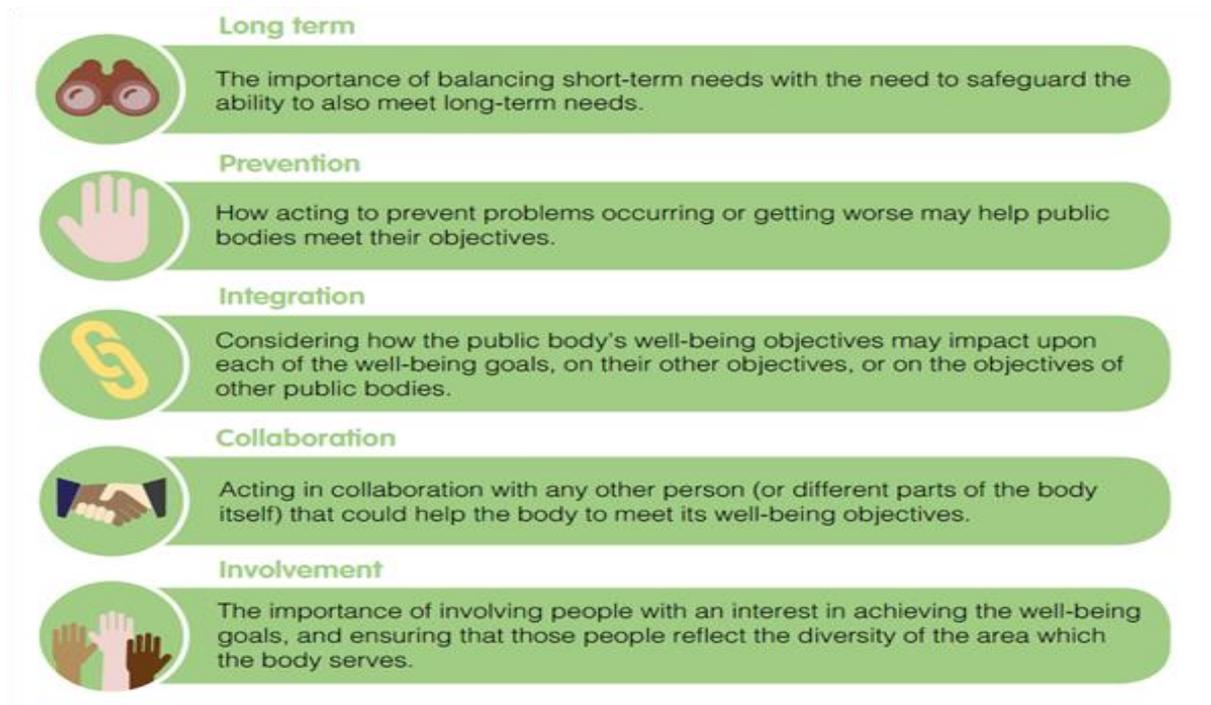
- Education
- Work
- Living standards
- Health
- Justice and Security
- Participation in Society

The areas as set out by the review were considered alongside the protected characteristics to enable us to make a decision in formulating our equality objectives.

In setting our equality objectives the College has also given consideration to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and is committed to maximising its contribution to seven national wellbeing goals which are shown below. As an education provider and an employer we need to consider the goals when making decisions and the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future.



The Act also asks individual public services to apply five ways of working:



We believe that our final ten objectives which have been modified following consultation are relevant and robust.

Engagement with students and staff through focus groups and other events have provided valuable evidence for setting our equality objectives. These activities helped us to understand the needs of our students and our workforce and helped us shape the Equality Objectives.

In January 2020, the College consulted with 210 student representatives on the Strategic Equality Plan. Students from all protected characteristics were involved in the consultation. Focus groups were held on all sites, where students were invited to discuss the following questions:

- Do you believe the College is fair and equal?
- In what ways do you think the College is fair and equal? What do we do well?
- In what ways do you think the College is not fair and equal? What could we do better?
- How can we encourage different types of students to get along?

In summary, the consultation found that:

- The vast majority of students found that the College was fair and equal. Students reported that they had not experienced unfair treatment or discrimination based on their protected characteristics, and overwhelmingly felt that all students had equal access to opportunities and support.
- Good practice cited included: LGBT support, support for disabled students, a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment, student voice mechanisms that allow students from various protected characteristics to have their views heard, friendly and supportive tutors, and fair treatment based on gender.
- Of all protected characteristics, attendees felt that the College should particularly focus on activities to support LGBT+ students (sexual orientation and gender reassignment), and students with mental health issues (disability).

Specifically, students recommended:

- Continued focus on mental wellbeing support for all students, and ensuring this is widely publicised and well-resourced
- LGBT+ awareness initiatives, including marking LGBT History Month, a rainbow pin badge or lanyard “ally” campaign, and attendance at Pride events
- Trans-specific awareness raising, including staff and student training sessions
- Staff training on tackling inappropriate language and “banter” in the classroom
- Use of diverse students in promotional materials to encourage more women to apply for male-dominated subjects, and men to apply for female-dominated subjects.
- Continued focus on improving the accessibility of the physical college environment.

All recommendations were incorporated into the final Strategic Equality Objectives.

In preparing the Strategic Equality Plan, consultation has taken place with the Diversity Management Group, the Board of Governors, the Senior Management Team, the Unions (UCU, Unison and NEU), and our staff and students. Stakeholders and interested parties were invited to comment on all aspects of the draft equality objectives with the following questions being asked:

- Do you agree with our suggested equality objectives?
- Do you think something is missing? If so what?
- What are the most important issues when it comes to equality, diversity, and fairness that you think the college should be tackling?
- What could the college do to encourage staff and students to update their equality data?

Feedback was actively sought from diverse groups, to ensure that those from all protected characteristics had the opportunity to share their views. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 83% of respondents stating that they agreed with the proposed objectives.

Respondents listed a number of equality and diversity priorities from across a range of protected characteristics that they felt the college should focus on; the most common priorities shared were:

- Ensuring equity of treatment and opportunity
- Tackling instances of bullying, harassment, and disrespect
- Race equality and tackling racism
- Support for disabled staff and students
- Ongoing E&D education and training for staff and students

These are all key priorities in the SEP, and we are pleased that the SEP reflects the priorities and concerns of our staff and students.

Student Voice



In January 2018, the College appointed a Senior Student Involvement and Diversity Officer (SSIDO). This role combined both student voice and Equality and Diversity into one holistic role, allowing equality and diversity to be fully embedded into student voice activities across the College.

Equality and Diversity is embedded in the mandatory student representative training and Student Union Executive Committee training, where student leaders are taught the importance of equality and diversity, of representing diverse voices, and asked to consider the valuable perspectives that people from different backgrounds can bring to consultation and decision-making. The training includes the concept of intersectionality, and asks students to take a non-tokenistic approach to equality and diversity - i.e. to consider that even within particular communities, there are diverse experiences that we can learn from.

The College produces an annual equality and diversity calendar of events, where one awareness-raising campaign is run for staff and students each month.

At student consultation activities such as focus groups, attendees complete anonymous monitoring forms, to track the number of students from different backgrounds and ensure that diverse students are represented.

Student Union



The Student Union work with the College to mark a number of equality and diversity calendar dates throughout the year via events and campaigns, including:

- LGBT History Month

- Mental Health Awareness Week
- Bi Visibility Day
- Black History Month
- Black Lives Matter

In 2020, the Student Union Constitution was reviewed, and a new role of Equality & Diversity Officer was introduced to the Executive Committee, whose role is to ensure equality and diversity matters are considered in Student Union decision-making, and work with the Events Officers to run events and awareness campaigns throughout the academic year. The Equality & Diversity Officer also sits on the College Diversity Management Group. As part of the review, equality and diversity was also explicitly embedded into the President job description, and the Constitution now contains a zero-tolerance statement against bullying, harassment and discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristic.

LGBTQ Society



In February 2020 the Student Union established an LGBTQ Society on 3 campuses (Afan, Brecon and Neath). These are social clubs that are open to all LGBTQ students, including straight allies who wanted to participate, and meet-ups took place on a regular basis. The LGBTQ Society also worked with the Student Union to promote LGBT History Month.

Trips to attend Swansea Pride and Powys Pride were in the process of being organised, however when these events were cancelled due to coronavirus, LGBTQ Society members attended the Wales-Wide Virtual Pride, an online event that featured performances and talks broadcast on Facebook live in July. This event was also advertised to staff, who were encouraged to attend.

E-STEP Tutorial Programme

Equality and diversity is embedded within the College E-STEP Tutorial Programme, a weekly programme of tutorial sessions on pastoral and vocational topics including health and wellbeing, employability, and digital skills. All students undertake this programme weekly as part of their college timetable. There is a dedicated equality and diversity session that takes place within the first few weeks of term, a dedicated LGBT+ session in February to coincide with LGBT History Month, and the College equality and diversity calendar is embedded within the programme, so students are informed of relevant campaigns such as Black History Month at key points throughout the year.

Following the tutorial programme, tutors may request bespoke awareness-raising sessions for specific classes to expand upon the learning received from the tutorial programme. One

example is a trans awareness session for Health and Social Care students in Newtown College which took place in December 2019.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The College is committed to supporting students' and staff mental health and wellbeing. In 2017 NPTC Group of Colleges became the first Further Education college in Wales to sign the 'Time to Change Pledge' signalling our commitment to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination and so beginning our cultural progression towards our strategic objectives 'to be an employer of choice' and a college delivering 'excellent teaching and learning'.



let's end mental health discrimination

Over the last two years we have trained over 10% of our staff to be Mental Health First Aiders. Staff attend training which is delivered over two days. The training which is fully accredited at level 3 equips them to provide mental health first aid to both colleagues and students. The staff carry out the role out on a purely voluntary basis. Although we now have enough Mental Health First Aiders to be based on each College site we are continuing to recruit as we are looking to address the gender balance and expand the number of male Mental Health First Aiders.



The Colleges commitment to mental health and wellbeing has grown from strength to strength resulting in a joint Health and Wellbeing strategy being introduced for the first time this year. The strategy sets out to embed a whole-college approach to health and wellbeing so that students and staff can reach their full potential, be successful and enjoy their time learning and working at the College. We recognise that our staff are key to the delivery of the College's vision and have a direct impact on our students and their experiences. When our staff are healthy, motivated and have a sense of wellbeing, this impacts positively on our student's experiences and outcomes. Because of the many dependencies between staff and students, the strategy sets out to align approaches to staff and students' health and wellbeing in order to bring about cultural change and lasting improvements.

Wellbeing and Study Coach support teams are located on all sites and are available to offer advice, guidance and support to all students. The team work closely with the College counselling team and college lecturers to offer support in all aspects of life both inside and outside of college. Staff support students who may be at risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training). The Wellbeing team has close relationships with local agencies in the area so that they can support students in the best way possible.

Counsellors are available to provide support for students and staff across all campuses. Access to the service is via a referral process; students and staff can self-refer or be referred by their tutors or line managers. Counselling is provided on a six-session model, and the team link closely with specialist external partners. During lockdown, counselling has taken place virtually via video call or text messaging.

The Wellbeing Team also run Resilience workshops for students throughout the year, and mental wellbeing modules are included in the E-STEP tutorial programme.

A Health and Wellbeing Coordinator supports and promotes the implementation of a comprehensive health and wellbeing provision for staff across all sites, with the

aim of promoting positive health, emotional wellbeing and resilience. As well as providing direct support, information and practical advice to staff in relation to general health and wellbeing issues they identify appropriate support pathways, including linking staff with external agencies where appropriate. The Health and Wellbeing Coordinator also oversees the planning and delivery of staff wellbeing events, campaigns, and regular initiatives throughout the year aligned with national campaigns such as 'Time to Talk,' 'Stoptober,' and 'White Ribbon.'

Disability and ALN Support

NPTC Group of Colleges is committed to ensuring that disabled students, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) have equal access to the curriculum. Our specialist staff offer exceptional levels of support to students, in a caring and supportive environment. We believe in involving students from the very beginning, placing them at the centre of the planning and decision-making process.

Our team have a wealth of experience and are dedicated to providing high-quality support for all students, including (but not limited to): dyslexia assessments, assistive and sensory technology, hearing/visual impairment support, and 1:1 specialist support.

Our campuses also have quiet 'Student Zone' areas where students can work, study or relax.

Disability Confident Scheme

The Disability Confident scheme supports employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to the workplace. In April 2018 the College became 'Disability Confident Committed', progressing to a 'Disability Confident Employer' in April 2019. As a disability confident employer the College has demonstrated that it goes the extra step to make sure that disabled people get a fair chance.



Stonewall Cymru School & College Champion

In July 2020, the College became a Stonewall Cymru School & College Champion. This is a new programme for schools and colleges in Wales, designed to develop LGBT inclusion across our services by measuring, tracking and celebrating our progress.



Trans Guidance

In 2020 the College produced a detailed guidance document for staff on how to support trans students, which includes information on key areas such as record-keeping, confidentiality, terminology, and contains a Personal Plan template for staff to complete with students who require support. The guidance was written using Stonewall guidance and best practice from the sector. The publication of this guidance was accompanied by staff LGBT+ awareness training, where staff were taught about key concepts in LGBT+ equality and language.

Gender Neutral Toilets

In February 2020 the College introduced gender-neutral and accessible toilets in every building on all sites. These toilets are open to people of all genders to use, and are wheelchair accessible.

Period Dignity

As part of our commitment to ending period poverty, in 2020 the College installed free menstrual products in all women's and gender-neutral toilets across all sites. During the lockdown in spring/summer 2020, students receiving financial support were also issued with Tesco vouchers to cover the costs of purchasing menstrual products.

Contemplation rooms

The College opened three contemplation rooms in November 2019, in conjunction with National Interfaith Week. These rooms are quiet spaces for people of all faiths and none, and include holy texts, comfortable seating, stim toys for autistic users, and ambient lighting and music. The rooms were designed and furnished using student and staff feedback from people from a range of different faiths.

Young Adult Carers

NPTC Group has recently become one of 12 colleges in England and Wales to be offered the opportunity to achieve the Quality Standard in Care Support (QSCS) Award to further support young adult carers. A Carers lead has been identified to promote the support available to both staff and students and ensure information is readily available on all College materials. In addition, a specialist post has recently been created to further support carers, which will offer resilience workshops, wellbeing and financial support across the College.

Armed Forces

The College is proactive in promoting recognition and additional support for armed forces veterans and children of serving families. Although a current holder of the prestigious Bronze Armed Forces Covenant Award, the College is actively seeking recognition for the Silver Award. A specialist post has recently been created to further support armed forces veterans and children of serving families, which offers resilience workshops, wellbeing and financial support across the College.



Our Strategic Equality Objectives

Our Equality Objectives will help us to meet the specific equality duties and will ensure that we continue to make progress in improving equality and diversity at the College.

The Equality Objectives for 2020-2024 are as follows:

- To ensure our student population is representative of the communities we serve. Following an analysis of our data and current research we have identified the need to focus on subject-specific gender segregation and our apprenticeships.

- To broaden the talent within the organisation by improving the ethnicity profile of our staff population at all levels.
- To establish a culture which promotes a positive and supportive learning and working environment with regards to mental health and wellbeing through the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- To improve the accessibility of the physical and digital, learning and working environment
- To create an inclusive environment that supports flexible learning and working.
- To improve the progression, retention and attainment of our student population with protected characteristics, as indicated by our data, to realise their full potential.
- To embed Equality and Diversity throughout the College through regular events, campaigns and awareness raising.
- To improve the quality and disclosure rate of the staff and student equality data so that our actions continue to be well informed.
- To ensure fairness in pay with regards to gender and ethnicity.
- To foster a supportive, safe and inclusive culture that aims to eliminate bullying, discrimination, harassment and micro-aggressions or any other unacceptable behaviours.

An action plan to support the achievement of the objectives has been developed and can be found at Appendix 1 at the end of the report.

Employment Equality Data

As an employer the College collects information relating to age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Information is initially collected during recruitment however at selection we ensure short listing is completed without reference to these characteristics. The College has implemented a HR system to enable staff to update and amend their own personal details online. Reports and analysis are informed by this data with the expectation that the information it provides will result in more robust and complete statistics.

Procurement

NPTC Group of Colleges complies with all applicable EU and UK procurement legislation, in particular the principle of non-discrimination, and apply the rules to all tenderers in a fair and transparent manner.

The College advertises contracts on the national procurement website – sell2wales.co.uk. Also suppliers from the Colleges Approved List will be invited to tender for low to high value tenders/quotes issued by the College.

Tender specifications are drafted with the aid of a Sustainability Risk Assessment template. The evaluation criteria are discussed with a Project Team, ensuring that valid Sustainability Risk Assessment Tool questions are included within the evaluation. Tenders can be a two stage process if they are over the EU threshold: a restricted process, where first there is a pre-qualification process and then the College will select a group of suppliers capable of fulfilling their needs; and then the tender, by which a supplier will be chosen from the group.

The pre-qualification criteria is concerned with things that have happened in the past (e.g. experience, technical capability, health & safety, quality and diversity & equality) while the

tender stage is concerned with what will happen in the future (e.g. pricing, project methodologies) The College also uses the Open Procedure, which means that any interested supplier is free to submit a tender. All tenders have 'terms and conditions' attached which reference the Equality Act 2010.

The College has two methods of monitoring contracts a Service Level Agreement – to agree on a statement of objectives, or Key Performance Indicators - these represent the minimum level of service that would be expected.

NPTC Group of Colleges has adopted the principles of the 'Opening Doors Charter' for SME-friendly procurement. The College will include in suitable tenders, the use of sustainable development criteria in determining value for money, including assessing the impact of economic, environmental and social factors. SMEs are encouraged to embrace sustainable development and the Procurement Officer will offer advice where suitable. The College attends 'Meet the Buyer' events, these are aimed at SMEs so they have the opportunity to meet with the public sector Procurement Officers, and have access to future tenders.

Third sector organisations have the opportunity of tendering for College contracts via sell2wales.

Our Monitoring & Review Procedures

The equality and diversity agenda at NPTC Group of Colleges is championed by the Vice Principal for Operational Services who chairs the College Diversity Management Group (DMG). The DMG meets termly and has representation from all areas of the College including Trade Unions the Student Union and Board of Governors. The group oversees compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and has overarching responsibility for the implementation and review of the Strategic Equality Plan.

The Equality Objectives are monitored by the Diversity Management Group each term and progress reported to the Senior Management Team and the Resources and General Purposes Committee of the Corporation Board. In addition, a report is produced annually on employment monitoring information and progress.

The strategic Equality Plan is a working document and where actions are not achieving the intended outcome a determination can be made to modify actions and/or the objective after reviewing the available evidence.

Publication and Accessibility

NPTC Group of Colleges will ensure that the Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives are published and accessible to all.

The documents will be available on the College website and on both the student and staff intranets in Welsh and English. Hard copies will be available on request at each campus and will be available in alternative formats as required. We will circulate an electronic version to partner organisations and feeder schools. Alternative formats will be available in line with our standard accessibility statement;

"If you or someone else you know would like this document in an alternative format please contact the HR department at hr@nptcgroup.ac.uk or on 07825 365 367."

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

Objective no.1

To ensure our student population is representative of the communities we serve. Following an analysis of our data and current research we have identified the need to focus on subject-specific gender segregation and our apprenticeships.

Preliminary analysis of the data has indicated gender segregation in certain subject areas, including STEM A-Levels, vocational subjects, and apprenticeships. To tackle this, the College will undertake an up-to-date review of college-wide data, and pilot targeted initiatives. The specific initiatives will be informed by the data picture, using sector guidance and best practice, and will be monitored and evaluated to ensure impact is being made.

Dept/Area	Operational Outcomes	Achieved by	Lead	Date
Marketing	Using the data, identify areas of underrepresentation and implement strategies for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of marketing material and campaigns to ensure diverse images are used throughout. Piloting targeted initiatives and assess through evaluation. 	AP: Recruitment	April 2020 and ongoing
Schools	Using the data, identify areas of underrepresentation and implement strategies for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise area-specific initiatives to address imbalances Progress scrutinised in HoS annual review report to DMG. 	HoS	April 2020 and ongoing
Pathways/SAW Partnership	Using the data, identify areas of underrepresentation and implement strategies for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise area-specific initiatives to address imbalances Progress scrutinised in SAW annual review report to DMG. 	PTM/ SAW Equality Lead	March 2022

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

Objective no.2

To broaden the talent within the organisation by improving the ethnicity profile of our staff population at all levels.

Analysis of BAME recruitment data has indicated that application rates and staff figures are in line with our immediate local community demographics. However, there is an underrepresentation at the shortlisting and interview stage when compared to white applicants. We will strive to address underrepresentation at this stage of the recruitment process and strive to increase our BAME applicant figures overall. As a College we want to be aspirational and draw from a wider talent pool, including attracting staff from further afield in the South Wales area.

Dept/Area	Operational Outcomes	Achieved by	Lead	Date
HR	Improve the ethnicity profile of job applicants and the appointment rate for BAME candidates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELIA of Recruitment and Selection process, materials, and website to be conducted, and implementation of any arising actions. • Consultation with current BAME staff to identify what attracted them to the College and suggest further actions the College could take. Data analysed and recommendations produced. • Implementation of recommended actions from consultation. • Engagement with community groups to improve the profile of the College as an Employer of Choice in BAME communities. • Use of positive action statement to be included as standard on job advert template. • BAME or HR representation at appointment panels where there are BAME candidates. 	HRM SO:R&S	March 2023

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

All areas	Improve rates of progression for BAME employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% completion rate of mandatory Diversity training and Unconscious Bias training for line managers and staff with recruitment responsibilities. • Develop a staff mentoring scheme and specifically target BAME staff to become mentees. Success of the scheme to be evaluated annually through participant feedback and progression data analysis. • BAME or HR representation at appointment panels where there are BAME candidates for progression posts. 	SDM SDM SO:R&S	March 2024
HR	Improve the retention of BAME employees through improved engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include 'belonging' as a sub-area of the Staff Perception Survey to explore BAME staff satisfaction rates - data analysed and recommendations produced. • Implementation of recommended actions from consultation. • Establishing a workplace 'allyship' programme to improve inclusivity and reduce marginalisation. 	HRM / SSIDO	April 2023

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

Objective no.3

To establish a culture which promotes a positive and supportive learning and working environment with regards to mental health and wellbeing through the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

A healthy college is defined as a place where a college is adopting a whole systems approach to health. This involves creating a learning and working environment and shared institutional culture where health, and wellbeing are recognised as being core to success and allows both staff and students to reach their full potential. Additionally, in **light of COVID-19 and the increased reliance on digital technology, potential isolation and disproportionate health outcomes, we will ensure that all students and staff are supported due to their protected characteristics.**

Dept/Area	Operational Outcomes	Achieved by	Lead	Date
HR / All areas	Implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the operational objectives outlined in the Health and Wellbeing strategy. 	HRM	December 2023
Student Support / All areas	Implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the operational objectives outlined in the Health and Wellbeing strategy. 	AP Students	December 2023

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

Objective no.4

To improve the accessibility of the physical and digital, learning and working environment

As a result of the recent pandemic a greater focus has been placed on digital learning and working and as a result a focus is placed on ensuring digital accessibility for all. In addition, the physical working environment has changed at the College as we strive to develop a secure COVID working environment. It is therefore essential that we incorporate physical accessibility into the new working environment.

Dept/Area	Operational Outcomes	Achieved by	Lead	Date
Estates	Improve physical accessibility to sites and facilities so that all areas are compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act and are COVID secure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit of all sites and report of actions required to be produced. Consultation with staff and students to identify areas of concern and potential issues Implementation of actions from site audit and consultation. 	FM CM	December 2021
ILT	Ensure digital learning and working environment is accessible for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the Digital Strategy with regards to digital inclusion, with consideration given to the impact on staff and students with protected characteristics. Staff and students are aware of and make use of the immersive assistive technology available through the Windows 10 platform and Office 365 Apps. 	HILT	April 2020 and ongoing
Student Support	Ensure that all students are digitally included and can access teaching and support services in college and through remote access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use and promotion of the Welsh Government digital inclusion fund to make provision for digitally excluded FE students Annual student consultation through the Student Representatives to identify awareness of WG digital inclusion fund, awareness of other forms of digital learning 	AP Students	October 2020 and ongoing

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

		<p>support services, and generate recommendations to better support digitally excluded students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of actions from consultation.		
--	--	---	--	--

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

<p>Objective no.5 To create an inclusive environment that supports flexible learning and working.</p> <p>Research tells us that 'flexible' work is evolving rapidly. At its core are individuals with potentially greater freedom over when, where or how to fulfil their particular roles or carry out their studies. This will help us to create a supportive and inclusive learning and working environment for individuals with protected characteristics, as well as giving us a competitive edge as an employer and learning provider, which is more important than ever in light of COVID-19.</p>				
Dept/Area	Operational Outcomes	Achieved by	Lead	Date
HR	Continue to improve flexible working practices at all levels within the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the operational benefits and ways to implement flexible working among line managers. • Provide and promote a range of policies that support and promote flexible working. • Continue to engage with the Disability Confident Employer scheme and implement recommended actions in order to achieve Disability Confident Leader status. • Include 'belonging' as a sub-area of the Staff Perception Survey to explore staff experiences of flexible working - data analysed and recommendations produced. • Implementation of recommended actions from consultation. 	HRM	December 2021
Academic	Continue to improve flexible learning to meet the needs of our students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build upon current blended learning approach so learning can be accessed flexibly by students, e.g. evenings and weekends • Use and promotion of the Welsh Government digital inclusion fund to make provision for digitally excluded students • Annual student consultation through the Student Representatives to identify awareness of WG digital inclusion fund, awareness of other forms of digital learning 	AP Quality AP: Students SSIDO	October 2020 and ongoing

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

		<p>support services, and generate recommendations to support flexible learning for students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of actions from consultation. 	HoS	
Student Support	Enhance student access to support services digitally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise a range of technology to develop support services that are more accessible for students, including online workshops, webinars, video series, and use of social media. • Annual student consultation through the Student Representatives to generate recommendations to enhance student access to support services. • Implementation of actions from consultation. 	AP Students	October 2020 and ongoing
HR and Student Support	Upskill staff teams and student leaders so they have the knowledge and experience needed to seek out and respond effectively to stakeholder views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory consultation training for selected staff groups and student leaders to ensure they are equipped to constructively participate in and facilitate college involvement activities. • Raise awareness of college involvement activities for all staff and students, targeting those from underrepresented and vulnerable groups so they can participate in involvement activities, so their views are represented. 	AP: Students	September 2022

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

<p>Objective no.6 To improve the progression, retention and attainment of our student population with protected characteristics, as indicated by our data, to realise their full potential.</p> <p>This is a continuing target and an ongoing priority for the College. We are also mindful of the national sector picture, which shows that students from certain groups have lower progression, retention and attainment rates. Our actions will be informed by our data, so that we can give all students the best opportunity to reach their full potential.</p>				
Dept/Area	Operational Outcomes	Achieved by	Lead	Date
AP: Quality	Provide data to assess progression, retention and attainment of all students, broken down by gender, ethnicity, and disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing baseline data and benchmark against national figures. Use data to inform subsequent actions to address any progression, retention or attainment gaps. 	AP: Quality	September 2021
Marketing	Using the data, identify areas of under representation and consider strategies for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review diversity of images in marketing materials and campaigns Pilot targeted initiatives and assess through evaluation, as per objective 1.1. 	AP: Student Recruitment	April 2020 and ongoing
Student Support	Work with current students and experts to develop interventions and advisory services for students who identify as: BAME, care leavers or care-experienced, carers, disabled, female - where females are under-represented in the academic discipline and male – where males are underrepresented in the academic discipline , LGBT+, parents or from widening participation backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bespoke interventions and support packages are developed and put in place so students who are from the identified vulnerable and underrepresented groups, can succeed Success rates of students who are from the identified vulnerable and underrepresented groups is commensurate with or higher than the overall College success rates. 	AP: Students	July 2023

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

<p>Objective no.7 To embed Equality and Diversity throughout the Group through regular events, campaigns and awareness raising.</p> <p>Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. By continuing to raise awareness and promote equality through regular campaigns we can ensure Equality and Diversity remains embedded throughout the Group.</p>				
Dept/Area	Operational Outcomes	Achieved by	Lead	Date
DMG	Schedule a programme of annual awareness raising activities which provide opportunities for participation across all levels and subjects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a programme of events throughout the year that cover a wide range of E&D areas • Sharing good practice and providing case studies • Continuing to ensure E&D themes and content are embedded throughout ESTEP tutorial programme • Monitoring via DMG 	HRM / SSIDO	April 2020 and ongoing
HR and Student Support	Devise and implement an effective framework of involvement activities that is clearly understood by students and staff and delivers the measurable improvements in the overall quality of the learning and working environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target training for staff and students from underrepresented and vulnerable groups so they can participate in involvement activities, so their views are represented (as per objective 5.4) 	HRM / SDM	July 2022
Board	To ensure the Board has a strategic overview of Equality within the Group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is Board representation on the Diversity Management Group. • E&D training to be provided for Board members 	AP: Governance	July 2021
Board and SMT	Leaders and key staff maintain professional relationships with the College's community particularly those who represent different ethnic, faith, minority and vulnerable groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Managers and Governors are active members of local and regional community cohesion working groups 	AP Students	September 2023

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

<p>Objective no.8 To improve the quality and disclosure rate of the staff and student equality data so that our actions continue to be well informed.</p> <p>Analysis of staff data has shown a steady improvement in disclosure rates however for certain characteristics it remains low. The College recognises that in order to truly improve equality we must base our actions on the actual profile and needs of our staff and students.</p>				
Dept/Area	Operational Outcomes	Achieved by	Lead	Date
HR	Improve staff equality disclosure rate to provide robust and comprehensive staff equality data on all protected characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff invited to update records on HR dashboard annually at the following key points of the year: induction, appraisals, CPD days. • Awareness raising of importance and benefits of collecting and monitoring data, giving staff confidence in disclosing. • Production of Annual Report every year. • Use the data from the Annual Report to inform future actions and support ELIA's. • Line managers to complete an annual equality review and submit to DMG for scrutiny. 	HRM	July 2020
Student Support	Provide robust and comprehensive student equality data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish baseline data and review current disclosure rates • Raise student awareness of the importance and use of equality data • Year on year 5% increase in the number of students who feel able to make an equality data disclosure • Use data to inform subsequent actions. 	AP: Students	September 2021 and ongoing

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

<p>Objective no.9 To ensure fairness in pay with regards to gender and ethnicity.</p> <p>We intend to consider the pay differences in relation to gender that exist across the organisation and to identify an objective that will address any difference identified. As part of the College's commitment to the Race Charter we also intend to consider pay differences in relation to ethnicity.</p>				
Dept/Area	Operational Outcomes	Achieved by	Lead	Date
HR	Measure the Gender Pay Gap, using the data to identify areas of concern and implement strategies for improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular analysis of our pay data in relation to gender and recommendations produced where required. • Implementation of actions identified. • Through regular appraisals identify opportunities for female employees on lower paid grades to gain promotion or development. • Promotion of flexible working and family friendly policies to support retention and progression of female employees at all levels in the organisation - see objective 5. • ELIA of Recruitment and Selection process, materials, and website to be conducted, and implementation of any arising actions. 	HRM	December 2021 and ongoing
HR	Measure the Ethnicity Pay Gap, using the data to identify areas of concern and implement strategies for improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular analysis of our pay data in relation to ethnicity, and recommendations produced where required. • Implementation of actions identified. • Through regular appraisals identify opportunities for BAME employees on lower paid grades to gain promotion or development. • Promotion of flexible working and family friendly policies to support retention and progression of BAME employees at all levels in the organisation - see objectives 2 and 5. 	HRM	April 2022

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ELIA of Recruitment and Selection process, materials, and website to be conducted, and implementation of any arising actions (see objective 2).		
--	--	---	--	--

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

<p>Objective no.10 To foster a supportive, safe and inclusive culture that aims to eliminate bullying, discrimination, harassment and micro-aggressions or any other unacceptable behaviours.</p> <p>EHRC research demonstrates that bullying, discrimination, and harassment remains widespread in some workplaces. We already have policies that promote dignity for both staff and students and as a College we adopt a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment. However, we recognise that we need to go further in raising awareness of the issues among the entire college community, and how to report them. We strive to actively celebrate the diversity of our learning community and promote inclusion, and are mindful of the need to eliminate any bullying, discrimination, harassment or social isolation that may arise from remote learning and working in light of COVID-19.</p>				
Dept/Area	Operational Outcomes	Achieved by	Lead	Date
DMG	To have a diverse and representative workforce that is welcoming and supportive of each other and our students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an annual training programme for staff on equality and diversity related topics, which explicitly cover discrimination, bullying and harassment, and micro-aggressions. Develop an allyship programme (see objective 1.3) 	HRM / SDM	July 2022
HR and Student Support	Consider and where appropriate change the membership of college strategic, management and working groups so they better reflect the staff and student profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using data from Annual Report, devise targets for gender, ethnicity, and disability representation on key decision-making groups, while being mindful of not placing undue burden on any underrepresented groups to sit on multiple committees. 	HRM and AP: Students	December 2021
HR and Student Support	Induction procedures and activities ensure that all staff and students understand the importance of equality, diversity and respect for all members of the learning community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of staff have completed the Equality and Diversity e-learning as part of the induction process. Staff induction HR presentation to be reviewed, to include clear information about the College commitment to E&D, staff rights and responsibilities, and the importance of E&D in working practices. 	SDM	July 2021 and ongoing

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See objectives 10.4, 10.5 and 10.6 below for student outcome measures. 		
HR and Student Support	Staff and Student Codes of Conduct are in place and set out clear expectations of student and staff behaviour and the processes to be followed to address breaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a student code of conduct that is relevant to all students • 100% of FT students have read and understood the Student Code of Conduct as part of the induction process. • 100% of staff have read and understood the Staff Code of Conduct as part of the induction process. 	AP: Students HRM	April 2020 and ongoing
HR and Student Support	The College actively celebrates the diversity of its learning community and promotes tolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A calendar of student and staff events is in place that promotes and celebrates diversity • The eSTEP programme has material and tasks that ensure that students have an appropriate awareness of equality and diversity matters 	HRM / SSIDO	April 2020 and ongoing
Curriculum	Completion of the eSTEP tutorial programme modules of equality and diversity, safeguarding and prevent, British values, digital responsibility, and student involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% year on year increase in full time FE students having completed the eSTEP tutorial programme modules of equality and diversity, safeguarding and prevent, British values, digital responsibility, and student involvement for the life of the SEP 	AP: Curriculum	July 2021