

Equalities Mainstreaming Report

Equalities Outcomes Progress Report 2023



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1. Introduction

As Scotland's national adult education college, Newbattle Abbey College benefits greatly from the diversity of our students and staff. We are committed to ensuring that equality remains at the forefront as we continue to develop and deliver a high quality learning experience.

We wish to ensure that everyone at Newbattle has the best possible opportunity to realise their full potential, improve their life chances and achieve their education and career goals. Equality, diversity and inclusion are core values at Newbattle Abbey College.

We are committed to the aspirations set out in our *Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2021-2025*. The college has a clear vision and strategy to promote equality, access and inclusion and this links with all aspects of our activity.

This report outlines the progress the college has made in relation to mainstreaming equality and equality outcomes as an integral part of college life. We are also committed to regularly reviewing and refocusing our priorities to ensure that we continue to make progress in this key area.

The college has created an inclusive culture which continues to provide equality of opportunity, process and outcome to all students, staff and stakeholders. This report reflects our dedication to fulfilling these responsibilities.

Roddy Henry
Principal

2. Our College Context

Newbattle Abbey College has a proud track record of meeting the needs of adults and young people at points of transition, helping them change their lives for the better. The college operates under a Governing Deed of Trust, the Trustees of which have historically included the Principals and Vice Chancellors of Scotland's ancient universities. We receive core funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as a specialist college in recognition of our unique nature and contribution, which currently amounts to approximately 55% of our total income. The balance of our income is generated through a portfolio of funding and through commercial activities, the income from which is invested back into our curriculum and infrastructure to support our purpose.

The college makes a significant contribution to its local community and plays a strategic, national role both through its provision and in promoting adult learning through representation and extensive partnership. Many of our students have faced challenges and find our curriculum and special environment create the right place for them to take their next steps towards fulfilling their potential.

We also have a growing international dimension, with new partnerships adding value to our student experience and raising the profile of Newbattle and Scotland with a wider audience. The college has hosted international language school groups for many years, and in 2022 we welcomed the first cohorts of Faculty and students from the University of Wisconsin System. This long-term partnership will see students staying and studying at the college throughout the year on the University of Wisconsin's *Experience Scotland* programme.

We are a very small college, with circa 28 FTE staff and up to 90 students per year, with a strong sense of community. Our curriculum is constantly evolving to provide the best possible opportunities for access and progression while staying true to our values. Partnership working and collaboration have always been key strengths, and we work with a range of partners to extend our curriculum and progression pathways. Our new Strategic Plan 2023-2026, published in December 2022, sets out our Purpose, Vision, and Values as well as our Strategic Aims and Objectives. These will guide the college through the next few years.

2.1 Our Purpose, Vision and Values

Our purpose is three-fold:

- To be a nurturing learning community that changes and enriches lives
- To champion lifelong learning and access to education for all
- To be a progressive custodian of our historic and beautiful estate

Our vision is that Newbattle will:

- Change lives and unlock opportunity
- Be a wonderful place to learn, study and visit
- Thrive as a model of sustainability and worth

Our values:

- **Inclusive** - We actively promote and embrace diversity and we are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity.
- **Caring** - We act with compassion, integrity and respect at all times, whether supporting our students and visitors or working with our partners and colleagues.
- **Forward thinking** - We look to the future in an ever-changing world, welcome new ideas and fresh approaches and act responsibly to protect the environment.
- **Empowering** - We empower our students by unlocking opportunity and empower our staff by supporting their autonomy and confidence to make decisions and solve problems.
- **Collaborative** - We work as a team to achieve our purpose and with our strategic partners to realise our vision.

3. Equality Outcomes for 2021-2025

In 2021, Newbattle Abbey College set four equality outcomes in relation to the themes of:

- Gender-based violence
- Mental health
- Digital accessibility
- Representation

Since the outcomes were set, the College has experienced significant change, including a refresh of the senior management team and several key posts. The actions noted in this report reflect the approach taken to achieve the overall outcomes set in 2021.

Outcome 1 – Gender-based violence (GBV):

A safer college community is created for female staff and students because of the college's response to tackling the inequalities experienced through gender-based violence.

Outputs:

- Implement a Gender-Based Violence Policy that safeguards staff and students when responding to incidences of GBV.
- Identify barriers that are faced for those who experience GBV in a college context.
- Develop a baseline which will be closely monitored each academic year.
- Create local partnerships with appropriate GBV organisations.
- Target work on raising awareness of GBV and the response within the college community.
- Offer training to staff to raise awareness of GBV and opportunities for continual professional development.

What we have done

- Established a Gender Based Violence Policy.
- Created a designated Sexual Violence Liaison Officer. The role of the officer, and how to access support should it be required, is explained to all students during induction.
- Established and/or strengthened partnerships with key organisations, including Police Scotland, Rape Crisis Scotland and Women's Aid. Our Learning Support team deliver student workshops with Police Scotland on Bystander and Sexual Consent Awareness Training. Our Learning Support Advisor has previously completed training at Police Scotland Headquarters and continues to work closely with our local police team to strengthen the relationship. Women's Aid delivered staff workshops on Domestic Violence awareness.
- Set up a general email address for Learning Support where students can email in concerns/complaints/or request meetings to discuss and disclose instances of GBV.
- Provide counselling for staff and students through either an in-person counsellor or virtual counselor through Health and Mind.
- Enabled disclosures of GBV and investigated promptly and appropriately.
- In partnership with Women's Aid East Lothian and Midlothian, delivered a *Prescribe Nature* programme for women who experience domestic abuse, involving the women in the planning and development of a healing garden within the grounds of the college. The college is seeking to ensure that this is an ongoing intervention.

Outcome 2 – Mental health:

Students are better equipped in managing their mental health through an accessible infrastructure which does not affect their academic achievements.

Outputs:

- Develop partnerships with local organisations to develop joint actions and solutions.
- Create safe spaces within college in response to the increased demand on staff and student mental health.
- Create a 'Fitness to Study' Policy that allows individuals to engage effectively as learners.
- Develop a framework to ensure specific barriers to learning are addressed.
- Continue to provide mental health information, support and services which are accessible to staff and students.

What we have done

- Developed a partnership with a local charity, Youth 2000 Project (Y2K), which supports young and disadvantaged persons. Through the partnership with Y2K, we have been able to sign post mentally unwell students to the charity where they provide opportunities to gain skills and confidence through participation in group activities. The charity also attends our college each semester to promote their

organization, provide sexual health information, and build relationship with our students and staff.

- Created safe spaces in response to the increased demand on staff and student mental health. This includes a “quiet room” inside our main building which has comfortable seating, weighted blankets and soft toys, art supplies, books, radio, sensory and fidget toys. The quiet room also has information on contact support services.
- Drafted a Fitness to Study Policy.
- Developed a framework to ensure specific barriers to learning are addressed. Our Learning Support teams hold weekly drop-in sessions in our learning support hub where students can speak to a member of the team to flag any barriers they are have to learning which are then assessed and actioned as necessary.
- Ensured all students are screened to identify support needs and mental health challenges. Students who have disclosed mental health challenges are contacted to arrange follow up meetings with a member of the team.
- Implemented a series of Wellbeing Workshops for students and staff. These workshops vary in subject based around our wellness wheel and programming framework document.
- Provided mental health information throughout the college, including on support and services with are accessible to staff and students. Our Learning Support Team circulates out of hours support information to all students prior to breaks and college closures to ensure they have them on hand should they require support out of hours.

Outcome 3 - Digital Accessibility:

Learners have increased digital inclusion from the digital learning infrastructure. Older and disabled students face fewer barriers with digital accessibility.

Outputs:

- Students find it easier to access services through measures that are created to improve digital inclusion.
- Learning and Teaching Policy is reviewed and amended to consider the increase of digital learning.
- Online learning will be closely monitored to ensure that student retention and success rate is proportionate to previous academic years.
- Digital accessibility is embedded into student recruitment and induction to gain an understanding of students' access to digital devices, connectivity, as well as confidence in accessing digital platforms.

What we have done

- Completed our *Digital Transformation Project* in 2022, which saw all our hardware renewed. Software updated and functionality increased. Adopted MS Teams as a virtual learning environment. Redesigned the IT Technician role as a Digital Technologist to further support our progressive digital capability.
- Increased the number of laptops available to students, meaning no student will be without a laptop and internet access while studying at the college.
- Adapted teaching and utilised online learning through MS Teams during the short term Covid shutdown in 2021-22. Students and staff held meetings and classes online along with delivering student presentations.
- Embedded digital accessibility into recruitment and induction by screening students on their digital software comfort levels.
- The Learning and Teaching Policy is still to be reviewed to formally reflect the increase of digital learning.

Outcome 4 – Representation:

Staff and students are confident that they are represented in the college community. Participation is fully accessible and inclusive regardless of gender, race, disability, and sexual orientation.

Outputs:

- Develop documentation and policies to support staff and students who are transitioning.
- Develop documentation and a support network for staff and students who are entering the menopause.
- Create support networks within the college community that are supportive of those with protected characteristics.
- Create a baseline and improve data collection on the representation of protected characteristics on committees within college.
- Embed in the curriculum the importance of representation for those with protected characteristics into college life.
- Provide training to staff and students on Equality and Diversity and how this applies to their practice.
- Establish equalities groups within the college for those with a protected characteristic.

What we have done

- Continued to promote equality, diversity and inclusion to staff and students. Staff and students collaborated to conduct an accessibility audit which led to improvements in accessibility.
- Adopted the national menopause policy for staff. Enabled staff members to attend a menopause workshop in collaboration with Borders College.
- Facilitated meetings for our Care Experienced students to attend a monthly support group. This support network allows a supportive community within our care

experienced group to share and foster discussions around challenges they might be facing throughout their academic journey.

- Ensured diversity on college committees.
- Emphasised equality, diversity and inclusion in the revised Staff Recruitment Policy.

4. Next Steps

The College's Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Committee will lead our work to make further progress against the outcomes set in 2021, as well as work towards refreshed outcomes for the next reporting period.