Report A: Equality Outcomes Report 2021-2025

Contents

This report should be read in conjunction with the following reports,

- Report B: Mainstreaming Activity Report 2025
- Report C: Evidence of Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes 2021-2025
- Report D: Rationale for FVC Equality Outcomes 2025-2029

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline the progress made by Forth Valley College (hereafter referred to as 'the College') towards mainstreaming equality across the organisation, and to the achievement of the set Equality Outcomes for the period 2021-2025. The report is a requirement of the College's specific duties under the Equality Act (2010)[1].

'Mainstreaming' activity refers to how the College integrates its commitment to promoting equality and fulfilling the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) into to the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

'Equality Outcomes' are set every four years and reflect the key areas of development the organisation will focus on throughout the four-year cycle. They are evidence based, have measurable outcomes, and aim to achieve the three main aims of the Equality Act (2010), including the PSED, namely to

1. **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation**.
2. **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Act further explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves,

- Removing or minimising disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Act defines nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (employment only), race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Outcomes help ensure that public authorities actively promote equality and consider the diverse needs of the communities they serve.

This report should be read in conjunction with its supplementary reports which provide examples of evidence of our mainstreaming activity (Report B) our progress against

---

[1] Equality & Human Rights Commission, *Public Sector Equality Duty: specific duties in Scotland*, 2002

Equality Outcomes 2021-2025 (Report C) and the rationale for the Equality Outcomes 2025-2029 (Report D).

National Equality Outcomes

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in collaboration with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission published a set of National Equality Outcomes (NEOs) which centre on a sector wide approach to tackling inequalities which are evidenced to be on a national scale across the tertiary education sector[2].   The ask of tertiary education providers is to work with and for students to contribute to the NEOS to make the system fairer and more equitable. Whilst the focus of the NEOs is upon addressing student inequality, they also consider college employees recognising that staff inequality will directly impact on the student experience and representation in the tertiary system.

Institutions are asked to consider each NEO for inclusion in their own Equality Outcomes. Where an institution does not include reference to a NEO, supporting data must be provided to justify such non-inclusion.

Following a review of the internal data, the College's Equality Outcomes 2025-2029 as detailed later in this report, have been set to align to every NEO as published.

The College's approach to EDI includes activities which focus on other groups who experience inequality which are not included in the protected characteristics (for example, students who are care experienced, facing financial disadvantage, have caring responsibilities). However, this work does not fall under the purview of this report. As such, activities and progress made towards enhanced the experiences and outcomes for those groups will be reported elsewhere through alternative reporting mechanisms as defined by the Scottish Funding Council, the Quality Assurance Agency, Education Scotland etc.

Overview of Overall Progress

Forth Valley College is committed to the provision of equal opportunities in all aspects of college life. We welcome students and staff from all backgrounds and aim to provide equal services to all our students and staff. We constantly strive to advance equality, foster good relations and eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation of any kind. Discrimination includes that by association or perception and harassment includes third party harassment[3].

Since 2021 the College has made significant progress in mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across all aspects of its operational activity including,

- embedding equality considerations into key college strategies and plans

---

[2] Scottish Funding Council, *Tackling Persistent Inequalities Together,* 2023
[3] *Forth Valley College Equalities Policy*

- Raising awareness of EDI through student and staff inductions
- Continual participation in numerous EDI campaigns and events
- Curriculum subject learning
- Publication of the FVC Widening Participation Strategy 2023-25
- Continuous professional development
- Inclusion of equalities data analysis within the Continuous Curriculum Improvement (CCI) cycle.

This progress has been supported by Scottish Funding Council (SFC) guidance, publications and data, as well as previous Outcome Agreement Frameworks which have demanded continual monitoring of the progress of students by age, gender, disability, ethnicity, SIMD, Care Experience and other characteristics. Such requirements continually challenge us and have in effect, helped place equality at the core of all college operations.

The College's strong record of partnership work is central to all progress. With representation on a variety of regional and sector specific networks all of which have the desire to improve outcomes for protected characteristics enables the College to work collaboratively, share intelligence and resource to drive collective action. Examples include

- Local Employability and Community Planning Partnerships
- National Tertiary Education Suicide Prevention Group
- Regional Gender-Based Violence Partnerships and associated sub-groups
- Children & Young People Communities Mental Health Group (Falkirk)
- SQA Equality & Inclusion Key Partners Group
- College Development Network Groups – Access & Inclusion, Equalities, and Safeguarding

This report will demonstrate that the College has made good progress in our equalities journey, however we remain cognisant of the persistent inequalities present in society and within our college community, and as such endeavour to address these in all that we do.

Progress on Equality Outcomes 2021-2025

The following outlines the high-level analysis of progress made towards each of Equality Outcomes across the reporting period.; identifies the alignment of each outcome against the NEOs.

Further detail and examples of specific work undertaken in relation to each Equality Outcome is included in Report C.

EO1: *We will improve our use of data and analytics to enhance our understanding of the student and staff experience at Forth Valley College with a view to improving that experience and enhancing our engagement with those who share protected characteristics*
Progress has been very positive throughout the reporting period. The introduction of the business analytics tool, 'Power Bi' across the organisation has allowed for track performance, and gain deeper insights into their operations across a range of data metrics including equality activity. The data is used in a variety of ways e.g. Continuous Curriculum Improvement process and Leadership Management Team Operational Dashboards to inform decision making e.g. Continuous Professional Development, Equality Impact Assessments. An increased depth of data analysis also enables the college to better target interventions where they are likely to make the greatest impact. For example, a widening participation analysis of local and National Student Satisfaction metrics, highlighted disparities in experiences for students aged 16 and under, which led to the introduction of enhanced student support for that student age group. Progress continues to be made towards improving how we collect and embed the use of equalities data to drive improvements in outcomes for those who share protected characteristics e.g. recording of CPD activity (see EO5) and systemising the analysis of all student/staff feedback by protected characteristics to further our understanding of how the college is experienced by those who share protected characteristics.

Relevant NEO(s)	All

EO2: *We will work towards building and fostering an anti-racist culture by addressing: curriculum and pedagogy, policy and processes, recruitment, and reporting structures.*
Progress has been positive throughout the reporting period. Anchored in the colleges commitment to equality and inclusion, all FVC policies are subject to EQIA processes to inform decision making. The delivery of anti-racism training to managers and curriculum teams, coupled by the development of online anti-racism CPD activities signifies a strong start to this area of work.   Participation by curriculum areas in campaigns such as 'Show Racism the Red Card' reflect the colleges attempts to include anti-racism in curriculum delivery, as we continue to engage with our partners to seek support to explore ways to fully embed this work. Written in collaboration with the Forth Valley Student Association (FVSA) the FVC Student Charter defines the rights and responsibilities of students in relation to equalities, diversity and inclusion. Anchored in the colleges ongoing 'Respect' campaign, expectations of students are reiterated through various channels including induction, bespoke workshop activities and reinforced by cross-college EDI campaigns. Knowledge of the Hate Incident Reporting Process had decreased (Early Student Satisfaction Survey data) within the reporting period, leading to a re-launch in early January 2025 with a view to formally including the promotion of this during onboarding and induction activity from AY 25/26

Further work is required to systemise the completion and recording of CPD to empower staff with the knowledge and skills to be able to meet these requirements. The college will continue to engage with our awarding bodies and education specialists to explore ways to decolonise our curriculum delivery.

Relevant NEO(s)	Race

EO3: We will make progress on improving outcomes and the student experience by addressing gender-based violence and gender balance in specific subject areas.

Progress has been very positive throughout the reporting period.

There is evidence of strong partnership work with regional practitioner networks including the GBV Partnerships of Falkirk and Stirling, the White Ribbon Steering Groups across the Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire. This has enabled significant engagement with community-based GBV services e.g. Rape Crisis Forth Valley, SHAKTI, Clackmannanshire and Stirling & District Women's Aid and Falkirk's Committed to Ending Abuse Services. Collaborations with these services has led to a training for staff and awareness raising sessions for student groups.

The 16 days of Activism campaign is an established part of the college calendar, where engagement with the campaign increasing year on year. During 16 days of Activism 2024, the College relaunched the Rape Crisis Scotland GBV learning module for students and promoted the newly developed online staff GBV CPD module.

Work to address gender imbalances in specific subject areas continues with some areas of success to note. Over the reporting period, science courses have seen the gender split even out, and the proportion of non-male students in construction areas have increased and whilst fluctuating year on year, overall, the same is true for computing and sport courses delivered by the college. Gender imbalances remain in subject areas such as engineering, construction, early years and the caring professions and more innovative efforts are required.

The FVC/SDS Modern Apprenticeship cohorts predominantly comprise male participants. The Apprenticeship team recognise these disparities through their self-evaluation and is taking proactive steps, for example, encouraging employers to adopt more inclusive recruitment practices through a newly developed Employer Handbook and developing case studies to highlight and promote diversity.

Relevant NEO(s)	Sex

EO4: We will take significant steps to improve well-being and mental health support to those groups who experience consistently poorer outcomes.

Progress has been very positive throughout the reporting period.

With additional funding provided by the SFC since AY2019/20, the College has provided a range of MHWB services to students; including counselling provision and a Mental Health Mentor service. Engagement with such services supports better retention and achievement rates. Data tells us that the majority of service users are female and are under the age of 24 with 57% of service users identifying as non-heterosexual/straight. 7% of service users are from BAME communities which is a strong representation.

For staff, the College continues to enhance its provision of support to promote positive mental health and wellbeing. PAM Wellbeing, the activities shaped by the Wellbeing Project and the Mental Health Ambassadors programme demonstrates the College's commitment to prioritising the wellbeing of its employees.

Participation in the BRIT Challenge of 2024 represented a cross-college approach to the promoting positive wellbeing across the wider college community with events and activities being offered to both students and staff simultaneously. Focused wellbeing sessions on men's mental health have been well received.

Mental health and wellbeing continue to be a priority moving forward. Work is still required on men's health, particularly amongst the student population as well as to ensure people from all protected groups feel that the services provided are relevant and accessible to their wellbeing needs.

Relevant NEO(s)	Sex; disability

EO5: We will take significant steps to systemise continuous professional development for staff specifically targeting understanding around anti-racism, gender-based violence, disability and well-being.

Progress has been very positive throughout the reporting period.

The People Strategy places the health and wellbeing of staff at its core. The initiation of The Wellbeing Project (2022) has made significant progress towards increasing the wellbeing and resilience of individuals, teams and the organisation as a whole. Outputs from this project include a Workplace Resilience & Wellbeing (WRAW) survey, work task analysis as well as facilitating targeted webinars and sessions which support staff to take a proactive approach to positive wellbeing. For a number of years, the whole college staff development day held in November has the principal focus of well-being and encourages staff to participate in department-led activities designed to promote positive well-being.

Mandatory training topics include Diversity, Equality and Discrimination, Safeguarding Protection of Children, Young People & Adults and Prevention of Sexual Harassment ensuring that all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in these areas. Non-mandatory CPD activities are promoted throughout the year, usually in line with national EDI campaigns.

The introduction of additional dedicated staff development days to Corporate Services staff and the use of academic departments staff development days at the start of academic years, provide opportunities to promote EDI CPD at different times of the year.

The suite of non-mandatory EDI resources and CPD activities continue to be developed for both staff and students to build knowledge across the college community although further work is still required to systemise the completion and recording of CPD which will allow for comprehensive data collection and analyses to take place.

NEO(s)	Race; Sex; Disability

2023-2025 Action Plan Progress

The Interim Mainstreaming Report 2023 detailed a series of actions to be completed 2023-2025 against several themes. Each theme is addressed in the table below identifying progress made against the defined actions and areas for further development.

Data	Analysis of student performance indicator predictions using equalities data has been part of the Continuous Curriculum Improvement process throughout the reporting period. However, since 2023, there has been an increased focus on the in-depth analysis of this data, with one of the five CCI meetings now being dedicated to a deeper interrogation of this data, with targeted actions arising from any predicted disparity in outcomes between groups. At present, the data focuses on students who have disclosed a disability, that they are care experienced and their SIMD area. Moving forward we aim to extend the use of equalities data in the CCI process to include all protected characteristics to ensure this is factored into decision making and the implementation of targeted interventions on a continuous basis throughout an academic year. Where feedback is sought on the experiences of staff and students, this data will be routinely analysed through an equalities lens, to understand whether those who share protected characteristics move through the FVC community in the same way as those who do not.	EO1, EO2, EO3, EO4
Staff/Student Recruitment	The introduction of the new HR & payroll management software, 'iTrent,' allowed the opportunity to explore further anonymisation of staff recruitment process. Whilst the system does allow for the anonymisation of applicants up to the point of interview, upon trialling, the administrative steps associated with processing applications in the new system, did not allow for a streamlined process when applications were anonymised, and resulted in errors that could prove more disadvantageous to applicants from all backgrounds. Therefore, the functionality has been removed, and the College will continue to explore alternative methods to reduce potential bias in recruitment activity. The College will continue to explore the practicalities of anonymisation when developing its student application system.	EO2, EO3
Curriculum and Pedagogy	The anti-racism CPD sessions in 2022 were well received, and the college will continue to explore The Widening Participation Staff Survey (Mar -June 2025) will collect, amongst other things, information from academic staff in relation to their self-reported skills, knowledge and confidence in fulfilling their requirements to support students who share protected characteristics, which will feed into targeted CPD activities in line with the PRD process.	EO2, EO3

Policy, Processes and Reporting	There is evidence that the EQIA process is more widely used than before – must continue. Plans to refresh the process and update the training – relaunch will help more staff understand this requirement and how to complete effectively. Helping staff to access internal and external data easily is also required. A refreshed EQIA procedure is currently being developed, which will be accompanied by a suite of training and supporting resources available to all relevant staff. This is due to launch AY2025/26. To support an increased awareness of the refreshed Hate Incident Process (relaunched Jan 2025), there will be regular promotion of the process at key times within the academic year. Continued efforts will be made to identify high quality training opportunities for all staff, including senior leaders around protected characteristics and structural inequality.	EO2, EO3
Continuous Professional Development	In addition to the mandatory Equality & Diversity training, a suite of CPD resources have been developed for students and staff on a range of equality themes, including Trans Awareness, Understanding Racism, Trauma Informed Practice, Gender Based Violence and Mental Health. These resources are completed by ongoing promotion of equality themed CPD opportunities including through LinkedIn Learning which includes learning resources on topics such as, Bystander Training, Inclusive Instructional Design, Cultivating Cultural Competence and Inclusion and Discussing Racism with Dr. Christina Greer. The newly implemented College Calendar will be used as a mechanism to routinely promote equality and diversity CPD throughout the year and will align with national campaign activity which the college is participating.	EO2, EO3, EO4, EO5

New Equality Outcomes 2025-2029

All of the FVC Equality Outcomes 2025-2029 align with the SFC National Equality Outcomes. These outcomes address all protected characteristics, except for marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity, where there is no evidence of persistent inequalities at this time[4].

A more detailed rationale for these Equality Outcomes is provided at Report C.

	Equality Outcome	How will we measure progress?	NEO
EO1	Success rates for college students under the age of 19 will improve.	• Attainment data • PI prediction data • Student satisfaction and experience surveys	Age
EO2	The success and retention rates of students who declare a mental health condition will improve.	• Attainment data • PI prediction data • Analysis of student satisfaction and experience data	Disability
EO3	Men (staff and students) know how to access mental health support (recognising intersectionality within this group)	• Mental Health & Wellbeing service user data • Student satisfaction and experience surveys	Sex, Disability
EO4	Staff and students report feeling safe at Forth Valley College regardless of their identity, where they have confidence in our report and support mechanisms, and complaint processes.	• National and local student satisfaction surveys • Staff survey feedback • Incident/complaint reporting analysis • Listening to Learners	Disability, Gender re-assignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation
EO5	Disabled students report feeling satisfied with the overall support they receive at college including the implementation of reasonable adjustments by both support services and academic staff.	• Student satisfaction and experience feedback • Student Support service feedback • Listening to Learners	Disability
EO6	Staff and students will know how to access support about violence, harassment and abuse report their experience and feel properly supported in doing so because our services are fit for purpose.	• Incident/complaint reporting analysis • Sexual harassment survey • Student support/safeguarding referral data • Student experience feedback	Sex

---

[4] Scottish Funding Council, *Tackling Persistent Inequalities Together,* (2023)

		• Staff survey feedback • Gender-based violence campaign activity	
EO7	We will give due regard to the attainment levels of students by racial group and ensure that our curriculum is diverse and anti-racist.	• Annual student equality profile data • PI Prediction data • Attainment data • Continuous Curriculum Improvement (CCI) actions • Departmental Operational Plans	Race
EO8	We will acknowledge where there are significant imbalances in curriculum areas and specific course programmes and take action to address these.	• Annual student equality profile data • PI Prediction data • Continuous Curriculum Improvement (CCI) actions • Departmental Operational Plans	Sex
EO9	Where representation is not proportionate to the relevant population, we will take action to increase representation of staff in the workforce and the Board of Management.	• Annual staff and Board of Management equality profile data • Recruitment campaign activity and data	Disability, Race, Sex

Delivery of Equality Outcomes

Delivery of the Equality Outcomes will be supported by annual action planning. This process will,

- Be consultative and enable contributions from cross-college staff, students, and partners and take reasonable steps to ensure that those who share protected characteristics are represented
- Align with the College's existing strategic plans
- Be a live process which is responsive to change, and adapts to the College's resource and capacity for delivery
- Identify action owners and have clear, measurable targets for which college data systems can support
- Be cognisant of, and feed into existing action planning mechanisms such as Departmental Operational Plans, CCI process etc.
- Involve contributions from the Equalities Advisory Group

Monitoring Progress towards Equality Outcomes

The College will monitor and report on progress on an ongoing basis through several existing mechanisms, including the Leadership Management Team, Learning Improvement & Student Experience Committee, Equalities Advisory Group, and CCI meetings. Monitoring will be supported by the creation of a Power BI data dashboard.