SHORT REPORT

AGENDA ITEM	**5.2**	**APPENDICES**
REPORT CATEGORY	**Reserved**	**- 5.3a Data Tables – EDI – 2024-25**
COMMITTEE	Corporation Board	**- 5.3b AoC Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter**
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DATE	**9th December 2025**	

REPORT TITLE – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Board of Governors is asked to:

- ***Note*** the content of the EDI Annual report for the 2023-24 academic year, and the level of assurance this provides.

2. Purpose

2.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Corporation Board with assurance that the College continues to meet its obligations and statutory responsibilities regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), whilst giving an overview of planned future developments in relation to Inclusion in particular.

3. Background

3.1. There are very few legal requirements of the Corporation when it comes to EDI, however, it is an important policy area and as such, a summary of the relevant key elements is provided in section 4.1 of this report. Section 4.1 provides assurance that the College has robust arrangements in place relating to the current legal and statutory aspects of EDI.

3.2. The main relevant legislation in this area is the Equality Act 2010. This act places a general duty on public sector organisations (which includes further education colleges) to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), to have due regard in our activities to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other unlawful conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic.
- Foster good relations between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic.

3.3. As well as the general duties outlined in 3.2, there are also specific duties which we are obliged to comply with, as an employer of 150 to 249 employees:

- Publish one or more equality objectives at least every four years;
- Publish information on general duty compliance with regard to people affected by our policies and practices every year;
- Publish information on general duty compliance with regard to our employees every year.

4. Key Points

4.1. **Board EDI Assurance**

This section of the report is designed to provide the Corporation Board with assurance over some of the relevant key aspects of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as follows:

- Policy and Procedure
  The College Equal Opportunities and Fair Treatment Policy provides a framework for challenging prejudice, eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people from a variety of backgrounds. The Equal Opportunities and Fair Treatment Policy was reviewed and approved by the Board in 2023-24 and will be reviewed again in early 2026.

- Equality Objectives
  The EDI Committee reviews it Terms of Reference annually and this includes an agreed set of objectives, which informs the work of the committee. The Finance and Resources Committee endorsed this academic year's objectives at the July 2025 meeting however going forward the objectives will be endorsed by the Curriculum, Quality and Inclusion committee, whilst forming a key part of our forthcoming Inclusion Strategy.

- Monitoring EDI Data across the workforce
  The statistics relating to staff and governors in appendix 1 identify no major areas of concern, though small sample sizes may exaggerate differences. Key focus areas are:
  - Enhancing succession planning, due to an ageing workforce.
  - Maintaining inclusive staff recruitment practices to reflect our learner and local demographics.
  - Ongoing monitoring and benchmarking of workforce data.

- Monitoring EDI data across the Learners
  The learner profile data in appendix 1 shows strong adult engagement for 2024-25 with 77% of enrolments for learners aged 19+ and apprenticeships accounting for over half of all learners. Gender representation is balanced in Education and Training but significantly female dominated in apprenticeships at 69% overall. Ethnic diversity amongst learners is modest, but higher in adult provision reflecting our more community-based offer across the North East and Tees Valley regions.

  Achievement rates remain high across all provision types, outperforming the most recently published national qualification achievement rates. Gender analysis reveals a notable gap in apprenticeships where female learners outperform males by 11 percentage points. Ethnicity-based achievement broadly shows positive outcomes for minority ethnic learners, whilst achievement for learners with health challenges is in line with those without, evidencing effective inclusive practice. Further commentary can be found in the appendix.

- Association of Colleges' Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter
  The College became a signatory of the AoC's Equity Diversity and Inclusion Charter from 1 August 2025, reinforcing its commitment to advancing EDI initiatives in the years ahead. A copy of the Charter can be found in the appendices.

4.2. **Planned future developments**

The College is now in the final stages of developing its new Inclusion Strategy, which will underpin our approach to embedding inclusive practice across all areas of provision. We will look to the Curriculum, Quality and Inclusion Committee for support in refining the final version ready for launch in early 2026.

To strengthen governance and leadership around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion we have refreshed the membership of the College committee ensuring representation from senior leaders and key operational areas. This strategic approach, combined with the objectives identified within our forthcoming Inclusion Strategy reflect the growing focus on inclusion, particularly considering the now confirmed Ofsted

inspection framework for further education and skills providers. The implementation of the inclusion strategy will be monitored through the Curriculum, Quality and Inclusion committee, with the Assistant Principal – Curriculum providing an update report at the next meeting in February.

5. Contribution to the Strategic Plan, Priorities, Aims and KPIs

5.1. The activities and outcomes detailed in this EDI Annual Report strongly align with the College strategic plan priorities. The development of the Inclusion Strategy and they refreshed EDI Committee membership directly support Leadership, Governance and People by embedding inclusion into governance structures and ensuring senior leadership accountability. Inclusive recruitment practices and succession planning address workforce diversity and resilience, while annual reporting and compliance with the Equality Act 2010 underpin robust assurance frameworks. These actions reinforce a values-driven culture and contribute to creating a high-performing, collaborative environment.

At the same time, monitoring learner demographics and achievement gaps alongside targeted interventions, supports Curriculum and Learners priorities by tackling inequality, improving outcomes and fostering belonging. Engagement with the AoC EDI Charter and community-based outreach reflects the partnerships priority whilst aligning resources to deliver the Inclusion Strategy and meet Ofsted's inclusion expectations ensures progress against resources and investment. Collectively these initiatives demonstrate how EDI activity is integral to achieving the College's mission of transforming lives through education, ambition and impact.

6. Summary of Principle Risks

6.1. The commentary below provides a summary of risk against the relevant principal risk categories and risk appetite statements:

- **Principle Risk 1 – Legal, regulatory and compliance (Zero Tolerance)**
  Risk of non-compliance with Equality Act 2010 or PSED however annual reporting, published objectives and policy compliance ensure statutory obligations are met.

- **Principle Risk 2 – People and Culture (Low Tolerance)**
  Risk of not fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for staff and learners is mitigated through inclusive recruitment practices, the forthcoming Inclusion Strategy as well as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee.

- **Principle Risk 3 – Quality of Education (Low Tolerance)**
  Risk of achievement gaps or unequal learner outcomes across protected characteristics, mitigated by data monitoring, targeted intervention and proposed changes to the Committee structure.