GATESHEAD COLLEGE

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report
2023/24

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report – 2023/24

1. Introduction

1.1 Gateshead College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report highlights our key achievements throughout the 2023/24 academic year, covering the period from 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.

1.2 This report explains the EDI work we've carried out to positively impact our objectives set in the previous year's report, focusing on staff, learners, and partners. We'll also share the College's objectives and priorities for the current academic year, 2024/25.

2. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement

2.1 At Gateshead College, we value and promote diversity and inclusivity. Our core values of respect, responsibility, courage, creativity, and teamwork guide our approach to Equality and Diversity. We strive to create a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone, both learners and staff, feels respected and able to achieve their full potential.

2.2 We have a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of prejudice, discrimination, victimisation, or harassment. It is the responsibility of every person who studies or works at Gateshead College to ensure that their colleagues and fellow learners are free to pursue their college and work lives without fear of discrimination or harassment.

2.3 We continuously evaluate our approach to ensure that everyone at Gateshead College can thrive and so that college and work life is improved for all.

2.4 This is the current EDI statement. A separate paper is being submitted for approval of the new statement and objectives.

3. Our Public Sector Duties

3.1 The public sector equality duty (PSED) is a legal requirement for public authorities and organisations carrying out public functions.

3.2 The purpose of the PSED is to make sure that public authorities and organisations carrying out public functions think about how they can improve society and promote equality in every aspect their day-to-day business. This means that we must consider, and keep reviewing, how we are promoting equality in in:
- Decision-making
- Internal and external policies
- Procuring goods and services
- The services we provide

- Recruitment, promotion and performance management of employees

3.3 The Equality Act protects individuals from discrimination. It means that discrimination or unfair treatment on the basis of certain personal characteristics are against the law in almost all cases this includes the following 'protected characteristics':
- Age
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual Orientation
- Disability.

3.4 We also must have due regard for the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3.5 Everyone should have the opportunity to flourish in an inclusive environment. We take a proactive approach to advancing equality and inclusion for all of our learners, staff and partners.

4. Our Objectives

4.1 The College EDI objectives were:
1. To continue to build knowledge, understanding and commitment to equality and diversity for all members of the college community.
2. To provide an environment that is inclusive for learners and other customers.
3. To provide a living, studying and working environment where all of our learners can learn, achieve and prosper.
4. To maintain and, where possible, increase the diversity of the staff and deliver a fair and supportive working environment for all.
   - Maintaining mental health and wellbeing, having resilience to be supportive to others in times of change.
   - To build capacity to inclusively manage, advancing equality of opportunity for all employees.
   - To make a strong and visible commitment to equality and diversity, supported by a clear action plan and effective leadership.
5. To better understand and meet diverse customer needs within our college, community and society.
   - To promote and enhance access to our services, premises, facilities and information for the benefit of learners, staff and the wider community.
   - To provide high quality services that are accessible to all and continuously improving.
   - To engage with diverse communities in relation to the provision of further and higher education to the public.

6. To ensure that major strategic decisions are made with an awareness of their consequences for different groups of people and those with managerial responsibilities demonstrate inclusive leadership behaviours.
7. To provide activity which promotes the protected equality characteristics.

4.2 These are the current EDI objectives. A separate paper is being submitted for approval of the new statement and objectives.

4.3 This report outlines the progress made on our 2023/24 EDI objectives in the "Key Initiatives and Achievements" section below.

4.4 The priorities for the 2024/25 academic year are listed in the "Priorities" section of this report.

5. Key Initiatives and Achievements

This part of the report highlights how Gateshead College has been promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion. It also shows the progress we've made towards our goals for the 2023/24 academic year.

5.1   LGBTQI+

Pride in Gateshead: In August 2024, Gateshead College collaborated with Out North East to bring the first ever Pride to Gateshead. This month-long celebration featured a programme of activities aimed at educating, celebrating and entertaining both local people and visitors. The event focused on promoting inclusivity, diversity, and equality, ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all community members.

The Rainbow Flag: In January 2025, Gateshead College received the Rainbow Flag Award from The Kite Trust for the work the College have done to create an inclusive and supportive environment for all of our students. This award is a national framework promoting positive LGBT+ inclusion and visibility for organisations working with young people. It acknowledges our partnership with Out North East and Gateshead Pride, our inclusive curriculum and on- campus support.

Out North East: Out North East held workshops with Gateshead College staff and learners to explore proud moments in queer history and examine changes in laws and legislation in the U.K. since same-sex activity was decriminalised. They also asked participants to reflect on 'what makes you proud' and 'what is important to you as a person'.

5.2   Disability

Mental Health Awareness: In May 2024, mental health and wellbeing week took place. Staff and students participated in a range of activities for World Mental Health Awareness including yoga classes, guided bike rides, talks from Andy's Man Club to support awareness of male mental health and Mind and our College wellbeing team delivered mindfulness sessions.

Better Health at Work Award: In December 2024, the College achieved the top standard of Maintaining Excellence' in the Better Health at Work award. This award champions the efforts of North East employers to improve the health and wellbeing of

staff. The health and wellbeing initiatives which were recognised included Walk This May where staff were encouraged to get out into the fresh air for a walk with a colleague. Also highlighted was the work done in partnership with men's suicide prevention charity, Andy's Man Club and the range of support which the college has in place for staff such as counselling and an employee assistance programme (EAP).

Red Sky Foundation: The College has chosen Red Sky Foundation as our charity partner for 2025. This charity supports babies, children, and adults with heart conditions by providing equipment, defibrillators and training across the North East. This is a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of heart conditions amongst staff, students and the community and to fundraise in support of the work Red Sky do.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities: To mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Gateshead College students were involved in Gateshead Council's 'PrimED for Christmas' festive fashion show. The fashion show was delivered in partnership by Gateshead Access to Employment Service, who support people with learning disabilities and who are neurodiverse into work, and Learning and Skills, who offer education and training to residents including specialist provision for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Project Choice Learner Case Study: In January 2024, we proudly recognised one of our Project Choice students, for securing his place at the national boccia finals. As an aspiring Paralympian, the learner is an inspiration to us all, stating: "My advice to anyone wanting to try something new is to take your time and have lots of fun with it. I really hope to inspire other young people with disabilities to be more involved in sports and to believe in themselves."

5.3   Race

Business Curriculum Case Study: In the Business curriculum area staff identified that students from ethnic minority backgrounds weren't achieving as well as their peers.

They put the following interventions in place:

- Reviewed target grade setting and challenged unconscious bias resulting in target grades being changed to be more aspirational.
- Improved communication with parents of these learners providing translations and targeted parents evenings.
- Reviewed the content of briefs and assessment methods to be more inclusive.
- Targeted support for exam preparation.

The impact was that achievement of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds was higher than the achievement of their peers from ethnic majority backgrounds.

Approaches are highly inclusive and make sure that all learners have equal opportunities. This year, the teaching team planned a trip to Paris supported by funding from the Gateshead College Foundation, they spent four days in Paris attending a business convention, touring Paris and gaining an understanding of the operations and marketing of Disneyland Paris. Five learners with EHCPs went on the trip and were able to exceed their milestones by overcoming their fears and living independently during their trip. The team and the experiences they create for learners result in extremely positive learner, parent and employer feedback. 97% would recommend the college to a friend and 100% feel that people of all cultures and backgrounds are welcomed.

5.4   Gender

Women in Construction Case Study: In March 2024, the College featured a PlanBEE apprentice, who is one of dozens of young women training for a career in a male dominated industry. The learner has been sharing her experience at recruitment events to inspire others to consider careers in construction, including women and other underrepresented groups, in an effort to increase diversity in the industry.

5.5   Widening participation

More than a library: Our Library team take great pride in being a welcoming space for all learners, celebrating diversity and creating a safe environment for everyone. Their regularly changing displays reflect the rich diversity of our community, featuring topics such as Pride, Lunar New Year, Ramadan, Black History Month, Disability History Month, and British Sign Language Week. These displays are complemented by workshops and sessions that allow learners to explore and understand these topics.

They also host regular craft sessions, inviting learners from departments like Project Choice and ESOL to join together in crafting for wellbeing. They also welcome ESOL students to share and demonstrate crafts from their home countries. Library inductions are tailored to suit these learners, ensuring they feel welcome in our Library spaces.

Our diverse range of fiction books reflects our college community, featuring works by authors who identify as LGBTQ+ and those from various ethnic backgrounds.

Charity Champions: Following a campaign in 2023 to implement Charity Champions to take on the important task of supporting our charity partners across the local community. The Charity Champions continue to support making a difference ad have supported charities include Gateshead Foodbank, Crisis and Red Sky Foundation.

Gateshead College Foundation: The Gateshead College Foundation supports our learners financially when grants can't be accessed through other means. Applications can be made throughout the year by both staff (on behalf of students) and students to cover things such as; travel to work experience placements, clothes for job or university interviews, travel to interviews, competition entry fees and anything which helps students gain Employment Edge and achieve their goals.

5.6   Impact

The positive impact of our work on EDI over 2023/24 has been reflected in responses made by staff in our annual engagement survey, where the College's highest scoring areas were around values and inclusion. This included the statements *"The college is inclusive and effectively supports those with protected characteristics"* (8.7), *"People in my team care for each other"* (8.6), *"I believe the college would be supportive of any member of staff who experiences any form of discrimination"* (8.7), and *"I feel I can be myself at work"* (8.6). All four questions showed increased survey averages from the previous year, indicating a positive impact on staff.

Learner voice is also reflective of the EDI work across the College, with learners responding positively to the following statements: *"People of all cultures and backgrounds are valued here"* (9.9), *"All students are treated fairly"* (9.3), and *"I feel free to be myself at college"* (9.5).

Both staff and learner voice suggest that Gateshead College has created an environment where staff feel safe to be themselves, feel supported and have a level of belonging. However, for both staff and learners, we recognise the value of diversity and share later in this report the College's EDI priorities for 2024/25.

5.7   Leadership

The College's EDIB Steering Group objectives, structure, and terms of reference were reviewed in 2024 to enable it to oversee EDI activity across the College. The group includes staff from the People team, curriculum, student support areas, and the EDI Link Governor.

The Director of People and OD and the Director of Brand and Learner Experience attended the 50:50 Diversity and Inclusion Leadership programme in December 2024, which has equipped them to develop a new EDI strategy and action plan for the College with the support of the EDIB Steering Group.

A strategy session with the EDIB Steering Group was held in July 2024, focusing on EDI considerations for both learner and staff groups. This session supported the group in drafting a new college EDI strategy statement, objectives, and action plan.

The Board attended an EDI workshop with 50:50 to help develop strategy and objectives. More training for the Steering Group and Executive Team is planned for 2025, aiming to empower leadership to challenge actions and support diverse thinking.

5.8   Recruitment

The College is reviewing its recruitment process to enhance our commitment to EDI. We are implementing several recommendations: updating job adverts with gender-neutral language, using social media campaigns to reach a wider talent pool, developing a candidate pack with diverse imagery, and improving KPIs and reporting to better monitor and attract diverse applicants.

Additionally, we have introduced equal opportunities monitoring for applicants as part of the recruitment process to assess the effectiveness of our advertising reach and to determine if further actions are needed to attract a more diverse pool of staff at Gateshead College.

5.9   Culture

A calendar of inclusion events has been developed to facilitate proactive and targeted planning of activities based on data from listening groups, the staff survey, and reporting.

The health and wellbeing of staff and learners have been a priority focus throughout the 2023/24 year. This has been achieved through the active promotion of the College's Employee Assistance Programme for staff and the recruitment of a learner

wellbeing team to ensure the delivery of our strategic priorities of supporting mental health and wellbeing and creating a safe environment where all learners and staff feel they belong.

HR policies and procedures have been reviewed to ensure they remain inclusive and accessible to all staff. Language has been revised to remove gendered terms, and to make the policies more concise and accessible. This work will continue throughout 2025.

6. Networks

Network groups are important for building an inclusive culture and environment. These groups give our people a chance to share their opinions and create communities of like-minded people and allies who support diverse perspectives.

The goals of these networks are to:

- Create opportunities for people with shared interests to connect, making a safe space and fostering a sense of belonging for members.
- Provide support by facilitating the exchange of problems, knowledge, and ideas.
- Act as a voice and catalyst for positive change throughout the College.

6.1 Staff Inclusion Group

The College's Staff Inclusion Group was formed in 2024 and includes staff from various departments across the college. The group has taken part in an Employee Network Leadership Programme to support them in effectively leading the network. They meet regularly throughout the year and will participate in several college projects, including policy and procedure development, as well as event organisation. Over time, the group's membership is expected to expand to include a more diverse range of college staff.

6.2 Menopause

The Menopause Network plays an important role in supporting our colleagues. Including the development of guidelines and training. The group consists of a cross section of staff, including those who are experiencing menopausal symptoms, have been through the menopause and anyone with an interest in supporting family, friends or colleagues.

The Network facilitates 'cafe group' sessions and contributed to the launch of the Manager Toolkit for Menopause.

To ensure this group meets the needs of colleagues, we be re-evaluating this network in 2024/25 to ensure it effectively supports staff and aligns with their preferences.

6.2 Dependable Friends

The Dependable Friends Network provides colleagues from across the College who have caring responsibilities or have sadly suffered a family bereavement get together to share information and experiences.

Meetings take place termly or whenever a group member feels a need to get together for a chat and there's also a dedicated Teams area for group members to communicate with each other as and when they may need some advice or guidance.

In 2024/25 we will review this network to make sure it continues to meet the needs of colleagues.

6.3 LGBTQIA+ Student and Friends Group

Launched in 2024 this group was co-developed with students and meets weekly. The sessions provide a relaxed atmosphere and an informal way for gathering learner voice. Learners from around the college can meet others from their community and build a trust network, making new friends with those who have similar experiences to themselves. The group is supported by the Library and Learning Officer and the Student Engagement Manager.

Since starting, students have told us:

"The group and space is super chill and not daunting. We can sit for hours talking in the company of others and just be. It's not problematic, which can be rare."

"The group has got me to try different things like crafts. I have met new people, especially from Music and Performing Arts, I have been able to mix with different students at college".

"It is a very relaxed atmosphere. The idea is to have a group where someone can go somewhere they feel welcomed and comfortable to ask for help and have discussions with people they can trust. Sessions did start to become more structured recently with the run up to Pride month as I wanted ideas and help to create something that would be beneficial and educational for those outside the group. I also provide LGBTQIA+ reading materials where I will read an article as students craft and we will all discuss it after. I will also look at terms and phrases to discuss how they feel about language that is used within the community and what is now outdated. We also research LGBTQIA+ history to help grow our perspectives." Library and Learning Officer

7. Priorities for 2024/25

7.1 Leadership:

- Once approved, integrate the new strategy statement and objectives into a revised EDI policy.
- Develop and implement an annual EDI action plan for the College based on the new objectives. This will be monitored by the EDIB Steering Group, with progress reported to the Executive and People Committee.
- To provide EDI awareness and training for the Board, Executive Team and Senior Management Team to improve consistency of awareness and practice, with the

aim of ensuring the leadership team have the confidence to challenge actions and behaviours to support diversity of thought.

- To improve reporting and measurement of EDI data for staff and learners to enable better reporting and visualisation of data and enable data driven insights and decision making.

7.2 Recruitment:

- To complete a comprehensive end to end review of the College's recruitment process, identifying areas for improvement and developing solutions to enhance EDI practices, and increase diversity in areas identified as priority.
- To review the equal opportunities monitoring for applicants as part of the staff and learner recruitment process to identify advertising reach and assess whether action is needed to widen reach to support the growth in diversity of staff at Gateshead College.
- To ensure the concept of 'culture fit' versus 'culture add' is considered in the recruitment process and ensure this part of recruitment training for hiring managers to be rolled out in 2024/25.s to be rolled out in 2024/25.

7.3 Retention:

- To update and improve our current exit interview process with the aim of gathering more quantitative and qualitative data to support decision making and to ensure we can attract, retain and develop retain the best talent. This will include collecting EDI data to report on characteristics of leavers.

7.4 Culture:

- To review and update mandatory EDI training to reflect the College's culture and values.
- To use staff surveys to learn more about the experiences of staff within the College and provide insight to inform the EDI strategy work.
- To further develop the calendar of inclusion events, working closely with the Events Steering Group to enable more proactive and targeted planning of activity based on data from listening groups, the staff survey and reporting.
- To continue focus on the health and wellbeing of staff and learners through active promotion of the College's Employee Assistance Programme for staff to ensure we deliver on our strategic priorities of supporting mental health and wellbeing and creating a safe environment where all learners and staff feel they belong.
- To develop and trial a college approach to hybrid working this year as part of the pay award. This initiative aims to address the diverse needs of staff, making full-time work and opportunities for progression more accessible to all employees with caring responsibilities, while balancing their personal lives.

7.5 First Impressions:

- To continuously review all HR policies and procedures to ensure they remain inclusive and accessible.

7.6 Learner Data:

- To consider how changing demographics will impact on what and how we teach, and ensure mechanisms are in place to test impact of development activities.

- To improve the collection and use of data so that it is easier to explore performance and impact for different learner groups in an accessible way that leads to tangible improvements in service.

8. EDI Staff and Learner Data

8.1. Staff

Understanding how our activities impact all our staff is important to us and a responsibility we take very seriously. That's why we regularly gather and analyse a variety of data which helps us see the impact of what we do.

Here is a sample of the data we've collected. It is accurate up to the end of the academic year 2023/24 (1st August to 31st July), with comparisons made to the same period the previous year. The FE sector benchmark data is from the Further Education Workforce (FEW) Data for England (2022/23)[1].

8.1.1. Employment Basis

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the workforce based on their employment basis. The majority of positions are full-time, accounting for 56% of the total, which is an increase from 54% last year. Part-time positions make up 33%, a decrease from 38% the previous year, while casual positions represent 11%, up from 8% last year.

Figure 1 – Employment Basis – All Staff
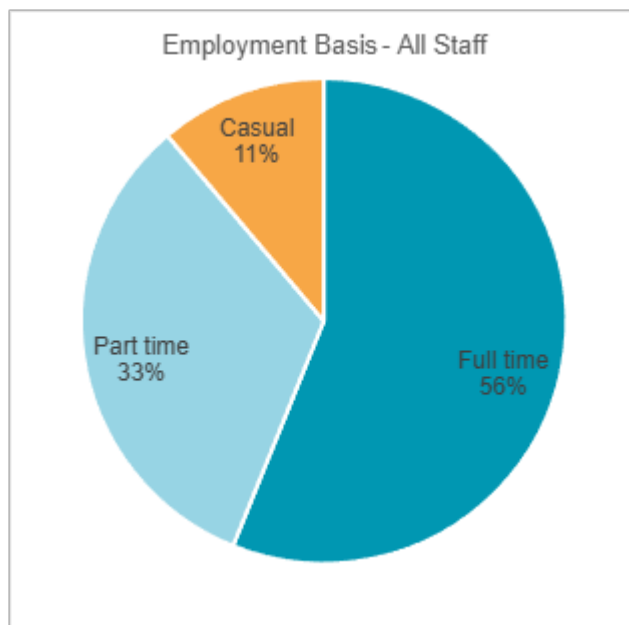

8.1.2. Age

The age profile data in figure 2 reveals a predominantly middle-aged workforce, with the 41–60 age range making up over half (51%) of the total headcount. The largest individual age group is 51–60, comprising 26%, followed closely by the 41–50 group at 25%. Younger staff (16–30) represent 15%, while staff age 61+ account for 13%, indicating a balanced but middle-aged skewed distribution.

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[1] [Further Education Workforce Data for England (2022/23)](#)

When benchmarked against the Further Education Workforce Data (FEW) 2022/23 data, the College's age profile aligns closely with sector averages, which also show a significant representation in the 41–60 age brackets. The college's 16–30 age group (15%) is slightly higher than the national average of 14%. Our summer recruitment campaign successfully attracted younger staff, with 28% of applicants aged 16–30. This outcome was driven by leveraging social media channels, new recruitment platforms, and updated job adverts with candidate packs reflecting our employer brand.

Comparing the 2024 data to the 2023 data reveals several key insights. The most notable change is the increase in the headcount for the 16–30 age band, which rose from 14% in 2023 to 15% in 2024. The 31–40, 41–50, and 51–60 age bands remained relatively stable, while the 61–70 age band experienced a slight decrease. Overall, the age distribution has shifted subtly, with a slight increase in the presence of younger people in 2023/24. While this trend is positive, the high concentration of staff in the older age brackets may have implications for workforce planning, wellbeing and menopause support, learning and development needs, particularly in digital skills, succession strategies, and considerations related to retirement.

Figure 2: Age Profile – All Staff
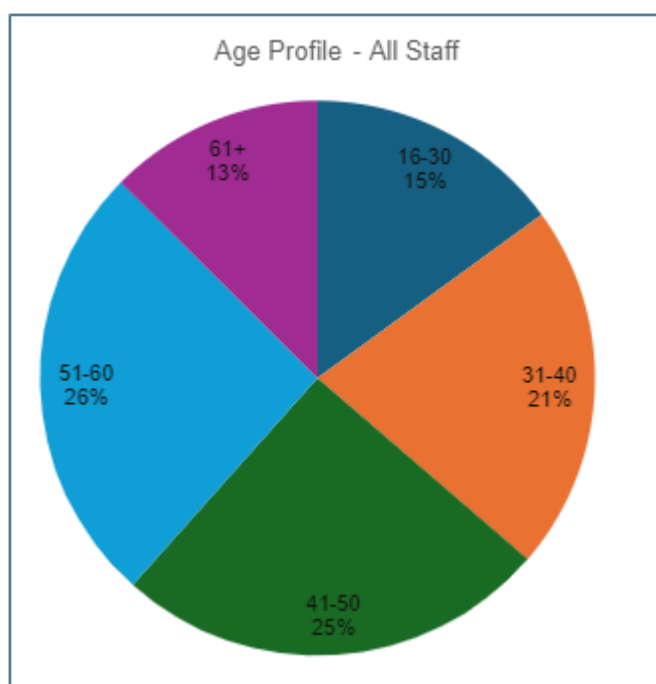
The age profile data in figure 3 for curriculum and professional services indicates that Professional Services have a higher proportion of younger staff (20% in the 16–30 age band) compared to the curriculum departments (12%). While it is impossible to know for sure, potential reasons for this could relate to the time required to qualify or the need to gain experience in other areas of education or industry before moving into further education teaching. In the mid-age bands (31–40 years and 41–50 years), curriculum has a slightly higher proportion (50%) compared to professional services (42%). Both groups have the same proportion of older individuals (51–60 years and 61+ years), with curriculum and professional services at 38%.

Figure 3: Age Profile – Curriculum and Professional Services

Age Profile - Curriculum and Professional Services
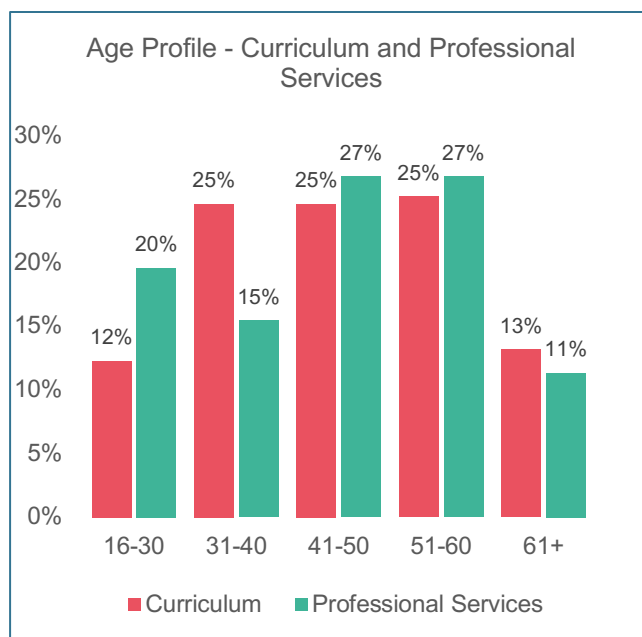
Throughout 2024/25, emphasis will be placed on recruiting a diverse workforce, including age diversity and other areas highlighted in this report, particularly by leveraging social media platforms to engage candidates.

It is recognised that knowledge sharing, and differing perspectives are benefits of age diversity. Research has shown that older age groups can share practical experience and expertise, while younger colleagues provide skills training and new ways of working (CIPD, 2015)[2]. With a significant proportion of the College workforce in the 41 to 60 age range, it is important to ensure the transfer of skills and knowledge from experienced staff.

As part of the People Strategy, the College will expand learning interventions beyond traditional training courses to include coaching, mentoring, secondments, industry experience, and job shadowing opportunities. These initiatives will support knowledge sharing and provide continuity.

Additionally, the College will develop a strategic approach to succession planning with associated development programmes and improved mobility opportunities to address skills gaps that may emerge as older employees retire.

8.1.3. Gender

The overall gender distribution shows that females constitute a larger portion of the workforce, making up 56% of the total headcount, while males represent 44% (figure 4). This aligns with the data from the previous year, indicating a similar proportion of female staff within the College.

The College demonstrates a more balanced gender distribution compared to other FE colleges, which report that 65% of the workforce is female (FEW, 2022/23).

[2] Landing transformational change: closing the gap between theory and practice (CIPD, 2015)

Figure 4: Gender Profile – All Staff
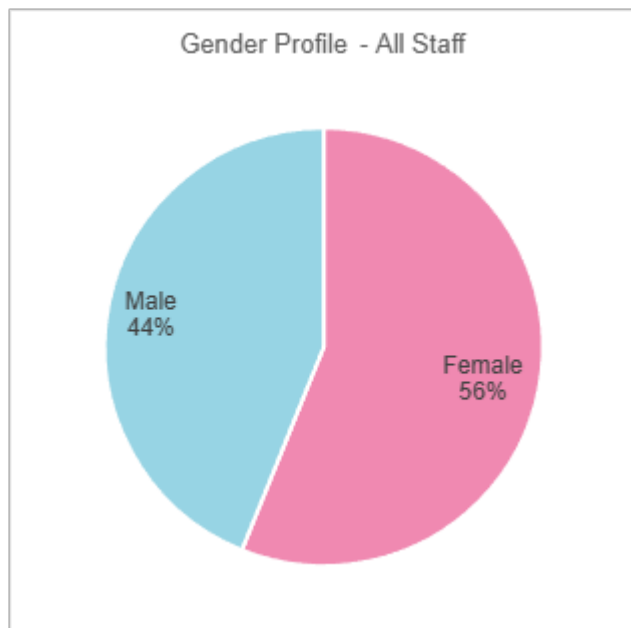
The data in figure 5 highlights the gender distribution within curriculum and professional services areas. In the curriculum workforce, females represent 52% of the staff and males account for 48%. Whereas, in professional services, females constitute 63% of the workforce, while males make up 37%. This illustrates a notable gender difference with more females, particularly within professional services.

Figure 5: Gender Profile – Curriculum and Professional Services
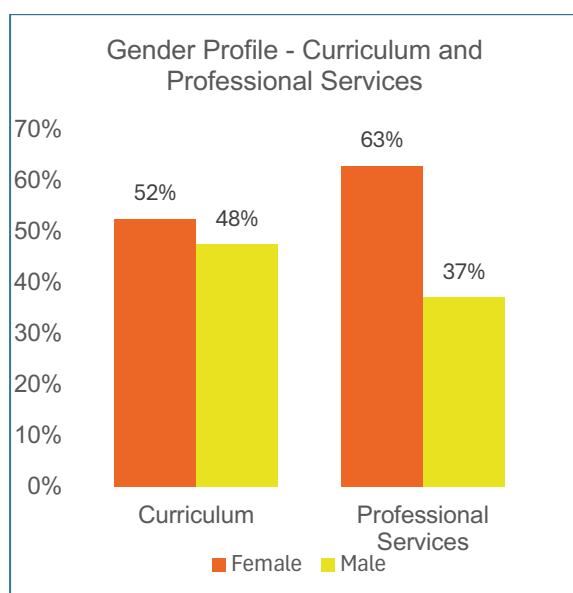
Examining gender distribution across various working patterns reveals interesting trends (figure 6). In casual employment, gender representation is fairly well split, however skewing slightly more towards a high proportion of females in casual roles (57%). In full–time roles there is an equal gender split. Part–time positions are

predominantly filled by females at 69%, while males constitute 31%. This suggests potential gender disparities influenced by preferences for work-life balance and societal norms. Supporting this observation, UK government research indicates a higher likelihood of women working part-time[3], and TUC findings highlight that women are three times more likely to engage in part-time and flexible work arrangements, often due to greater responsibilities in domestic and caregiving roles[4].

Figure 6: Gender Profile – Working Patterns
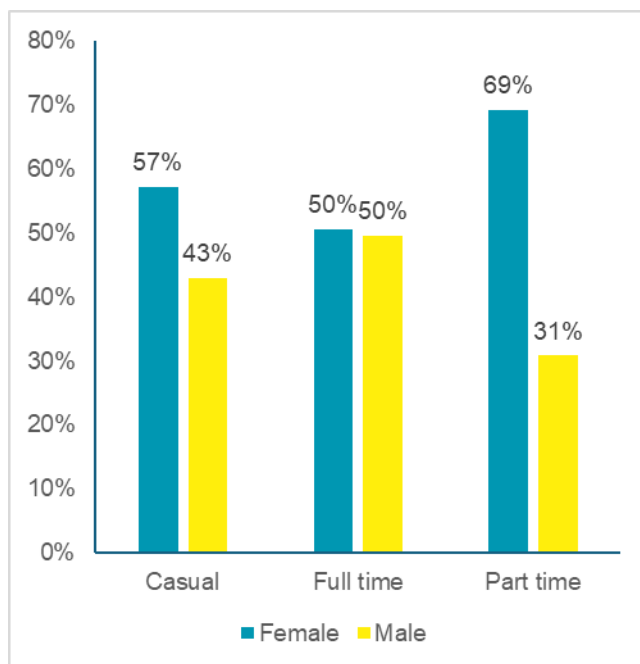
In 2023/24, the College reviewed its flexible working and family-friendly policies. Throughout 2024/25, we will continue to promote these policies and support the training and development of managers to apply them consistently. Additionally, in 2024/25 a working group will be put together to develop and trial a college approach to hybrid working as part of the pay award. This will help address the diverse needs of staff, making it easier for all employees with caring responsibilities to access full-time work and opportunities for progression, while balancing their personal responsibilities.

8.1.4. Gender Identification and Reassignment

The College have recently started collecting data on gender identity (in addition to legal sex) and gender reassignment.

#### 8.1.4.1. Gender Identification

0% of staff have disclosed that the 'identify in another way', with 1% of staff preferring not to answer (figure 7). Nationally, staff 'identifying in another way' is 0.1% (FEW,

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[3] Women and the UK economy (2024)
[4] TUC: Women much more likely than men to have flexible work arrangements that lead to loss of hours and pay (2022)

2022/23). The absence of staff members identifying in another way and preferring not to answer is an area to explore further with the support of the staff inclusion group to establish if there is a barrier to disclosing gender identification.

Figure 7 – Gender Identification – All Staff
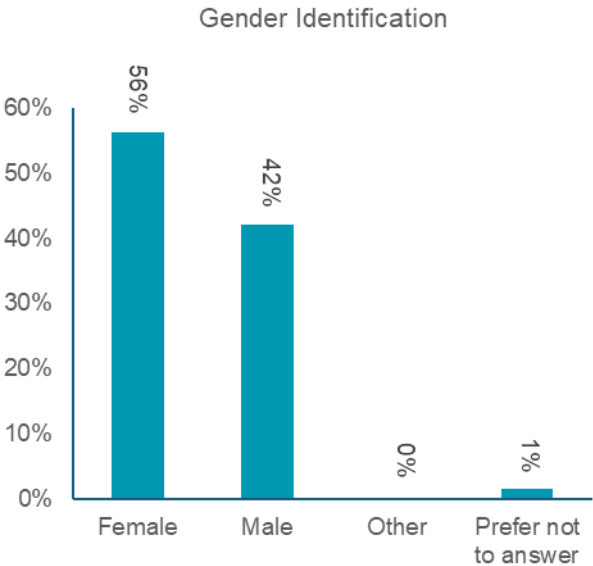
8.1.4.2. Gender Reassignment

Of those staff who disclosed their gender reassignment, 0.2% reported that their gender had been reassigned (figure 8). This is a relatively low percentage but still represents individuals within the workforce who have undergone gender reassignment. A further 3% of staff stated that they prefer not to answer. As with gender identification, the low number of staff identifying in another way and preferring not to answer is an area to explore further with the support of the staff inclusion group to establish if there is a barrier to disclosing gender reassignment.
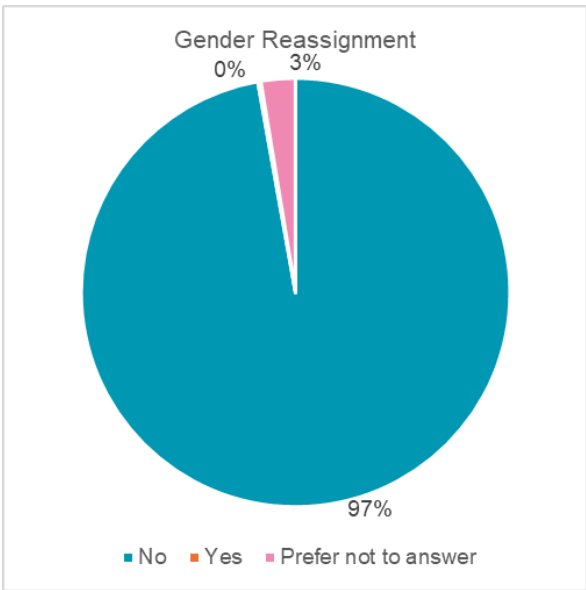

Figure 8 – Gender Reassignment – All Staff

A priority for 2024/25 is to introduce a Staff Inclusion Group, review diversity and inclusion policies, and develop a new EDI strategy, objectives and action plan. This will promote an inclusive environment where individuals with diverse identities feel comfortable being open about their identity.
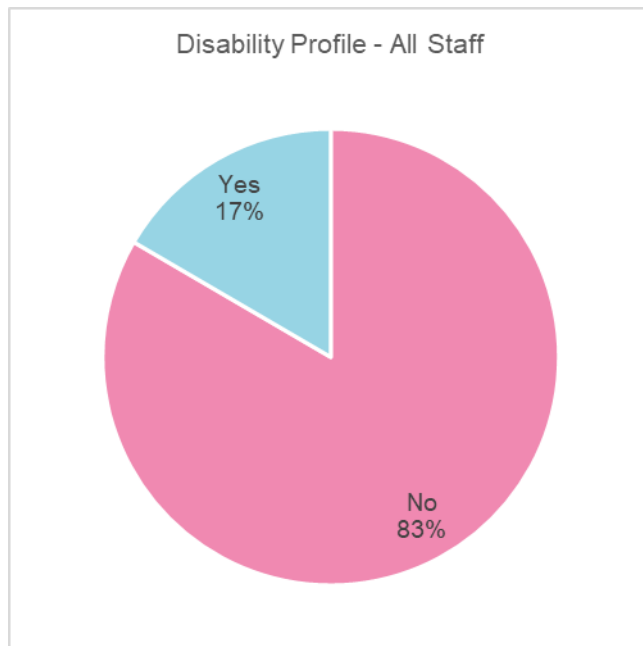
8.1.5. Disability

The disability profile shows that 16% of staff identify as having a disability, while 84% do

not (figure 9). This distribution is consistent across both curriculum and professional services, mirroring the data from the 2022/23 period.

Nationally, 7% of the further education workforce identified as having a disability in 2022/23 (FEW, 2022/23). At the College, this figure is 16%, higher than the sector average but lower than the North East region (21%). This suggests the workforce better reflects the regional disability prevalence and could also indicate the College's inclusivity and accessibility as an employer.

Figure 9: Disability Profile – All Staff

Among those who report a disability, conditions such as epilepsy, asthma, and diabetes are the most prevalent. Other significant categories include specific learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia), hearing impairments, and disabilities affecting mobility.

Annual staff survey data from March 2024 sets out that the College is viewed as inclusive and supportive of staff addressing experiences of discrimination. The average score for the statement, "*the college is inclusive and effectively supports those with protected characteristics,*" rose from 8.5 in 2022/23 to 8.7 in 2023/24. Moving forward, the College will focus on recruitment and selection processes, as well as line manager training throughout 2024/25, to enhance disability diversity and ensure a consistent approach to reasonable adjustments.

Figure 10 shows that the percentage of total staff declaring a disability increases with age, up to the 61+ age category. The highest percentage of our disabled staff is observed in the 51 to 60 age range (28%). The 41 to 50 and 51 to 60 age range collectively account for a significant portion of staff who have a declared disability (50%). This suggests that disabilities may become more prevalent or declared during middle age. The 61 to 70 age group has the lowest percentage (11%).

Understanding the age distribution of staff with declared disabilities allows the College to tailor workplace accommodations and customise support measures. Support measures could be considering flexible working hours or remote working options,

ergonomic adjustments in workspaces, and the use of assistive technologies, including specific hardware or software solutions.

Figure 10: Disability Profile – All Staff by Age
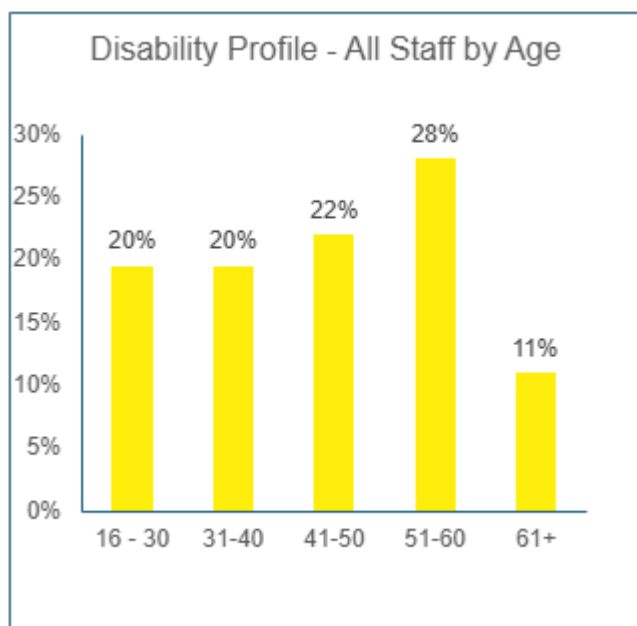
8.1.6. Ethnicity

The staff ethnicity profile illustrated in figure 11 reveals a predominantly white workforce at 95%, with Asian or Asian British (1%), Black or Black British (0.6%), Mixed (2%), and Other Ethnic Groups (1.4%). 4.9% of the staff have not disclosed their ethnicity. This suggests there is an opportunity to improve the disclosure of ethnicity data, which is essential for accurately addressing diversity and inclusion within the workforce.

Nationally, 20.6% of the further education workforce identified as belonging to an ethnic minority group (FEW, 2022/23). In contrast, the College has a significantly lower representation of ethnic minorities, with 5% of staff identifying as non-White. Specifically, the College's representation of Asian or Asian British (1%), Black or Black British (0.6%), Mixed (2%), and Other Ethnic Groups (1.4%) is much lower than the national average.

The North East is the least ethnically diverse region in England, with 7% of residents identifying as Asian (3.7%), black (1%), mixed (1.3%) or 'other' (1%). The College's ethnic diversity is slightly lower but similar to regional figures.

Figure 11: Ethnic Profile – All Staff

Ethnic Profile - All staff

Category	Percentage
White	95.0%
Other Ethnic Groups	1.4%
Mixed	2.0%
Black or Black British	0.6%
Asian or Asian British	1.0%
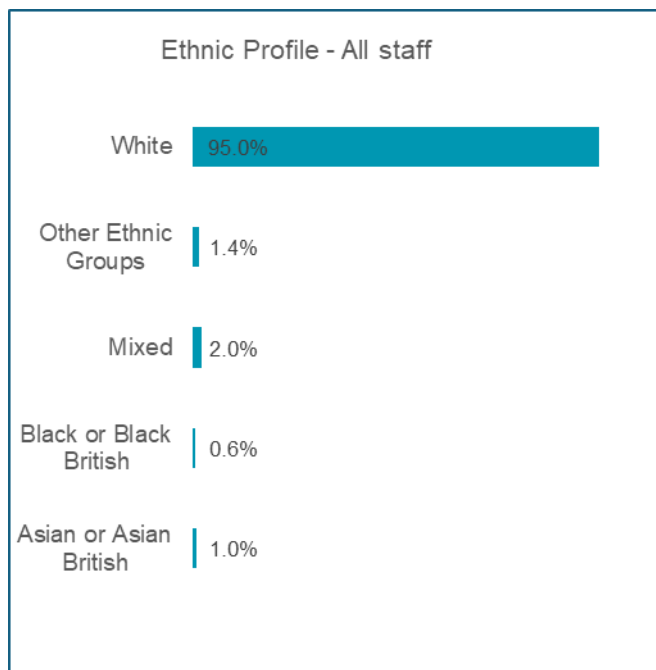
Comparing the 2023/24 and 2022/23 ethnicity profiles, the workforce remains predominantly white, with a slight increase from 94.5% to 95%. Representation of Asian or Asian British, black or black British, mixed, and other ethnic groups has seen minor increases. Overall, there are small but positive changes towards a more diverse workforce.

The college's learner population is becoming more ethnically diverse (see section 9.1.4), with the proportion of learners identifying as White British declining from 82.4% to 71.7% over the last three academic years. In contrast, staff remains predominantly White at 95%, with only small percentages of Asian or Asian British (1%), Black or Black British (0.6%), Mixed (2%), and Other Ethnic Groups (1.4%), and 4.9% of staff not disclosing their ethnicity. Not having staff that reflects its learners can result in fewer role models for students and might limit the cultural competency among staff, potentially making it more challenging to understand and address the diverse needs of the student population, which can influence student engagement and success.

Moving into the 2024/25 academic year, emphasis will be placed on refining the College's recruitment strategies to encourage a diverse applicant pool and to mitigate any barriers. Equal opportunities monitoring will be enhanced during the recruitment process to measure the breadth of our outreach and support the increase in ethnic diversity among our staff. We will also need to continue to focus on supporting our staff awareness of different cultures and beliefs through training, development and sharing stories.

8.1.7. Religion and Belief

Figure 12 shows the religion and belief of Gateshead College staff. 47.1% identify as Christian (Protestant 27.2%, Roman Catholic 16.7%, Orthodox 3.2%), an increase of 3% from last year. Non-religious affiliations such as atheist (20.2%) and agnostic (10.1%) together make up 30.3%, an increase of 3.1% from last year. 'Other' religions or beliefs

account for 9.1%, indicating a diverse range of religious affiliations and 11.1% of staff prefer not to answer, indicating some discomfort in sharing this information.

Figure 12: Religion and Belief – All Staff
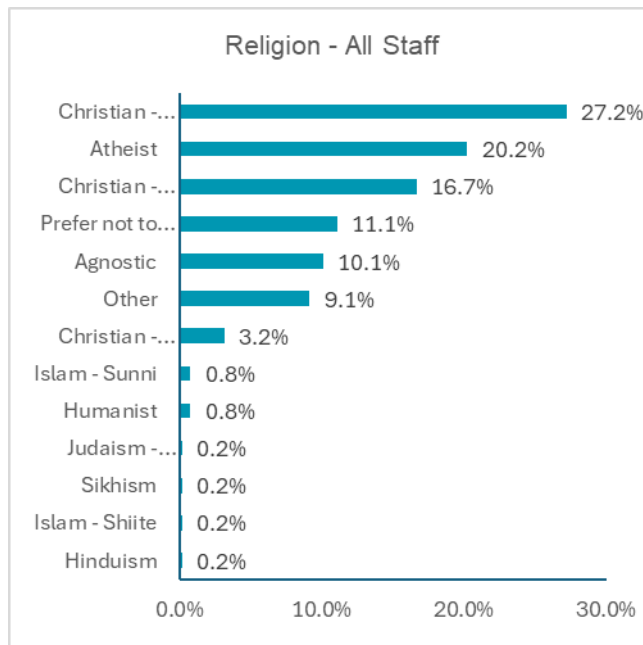
Understanding religious diversity among staff is crucial for workplace dynamics, inclusivity, and cultural awareness. Celebrating this diversity helps create a safe environment for sharing faith and exchanging ideas.
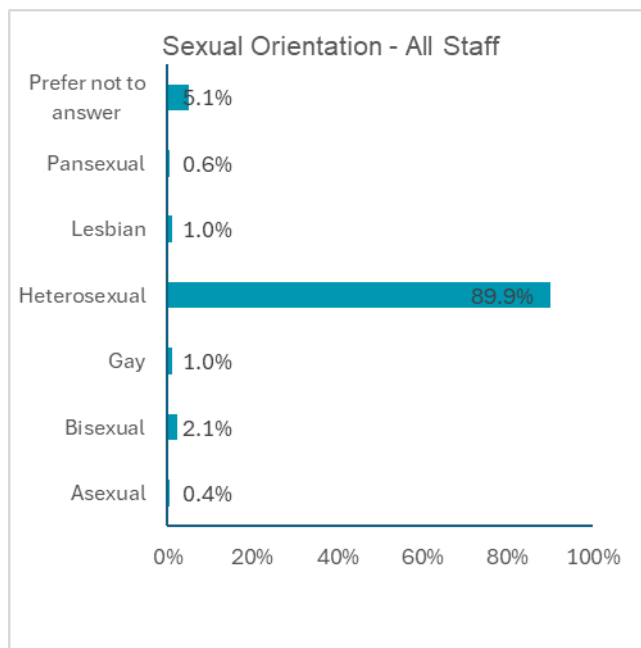
An improved College events calendar enabling staff to celebrate and share cultural experiences will highlight major religious holidays, ensuring the whole College community feel recognised and respected. We will also promote inclusive language and focus promoting diversity in recruitment campaigns to attract a broader range of applicants.

8.1.8. Sexual Orientation

Figure 13 summarises the sexual orientation of staff at Gateshead College. The majority of the staff identify as heterosexual (90%), a 5% increase on last year, indicating that this is the predominant sexual orientation. The percentages for bisexual at 2%, gay at 1%, and lesbian at 1% orientations are comparatively lower. This suggests that non-heterosexual orientations are less prevalent within the staff at Gateshead College and in line with the figures reported last year.

We recognise that 5% of staff have not disclosed their sexual orientation and want to understand the reasons behind this, considering factors such as the effectiveness of data collection processes, the optional nature of the question, concerns about confidentiality, and individual preferences for privacy.

Figure 13: Percentage of staff by sexual orientation

Sexual Orientation - All Staff

Category	Percentage
Prefer not to answer	5.1%
Pansexual	0.6%
Lesbian	1.0%
Heterosexual	89.9%
Gay	1.0%
Bisexual	2.1%
Asexual	0.4%

While the majority of staff identify as heterosexual, the presence of individuals with different sexual orientations (bisexual, gay, lesbian) indicates a level of diversity within the Gateshead College workforce.

The data signifies the importance of fostering an inclusive workplace culture and a priority for 2024/25 is to ensure the representation of LGBTQI+ staff in the inclusion group to ensure there is focus on inclusivity for the College's LGBTQI+ community. The group will provide a supportive community for employees, organise events, influence policy development and offer resources for education and awareness. It will also be a priority to ensure that College's policies explicitly prohibit discrimination and provide equal benefits to all staff.

Recent data shows a significant increase in young people identifying as gay and bisexual (ONS, 2023). The data shows that younger people were more likely to identify as LGB than older people; around 1 in 10 (10.4%) of those aged 16 to 24 years identified as LGB, compared with around 1 in 100 (0.9%) of those aged 65 years and over. In 2024/25, we will review staff intersectionality to assess how the college's aging workforce might affect diversity.

9. Learners

9.1. Learner Data Analysis

Understanding how our activities affect all our learners is important to us and a responsibility we take very seriously. That's why we regularly gather and analyse a variety of data which helps us see the impact of what we do, especially for learners with protected equality characteristics. When we notice differences, we are genuinely curious about the reasons behind them. We evaluate these as part of our Self-Assessment processes throughout the academic year and take necessary actions to address any issues.

Here is a sample of the data we've collected, accurate up to the end of the academic year 2023/24.

9.1.1. Age

Over the past three years, the age profile of our learners has remained fairly consistent (figure 14). The largest group continues to be those aged 16-18, with only about a 2% variation. We've noticed a significant increase in learners aged 19-23, growing from 15.3% to 22.1% of our cohort. The number of learners aged 24-30 has stayed almost the same, with less than a 1% change. However, we've seen a decline in learners aged 31 and older during this period.

Figure 14: Age – 3-year trend
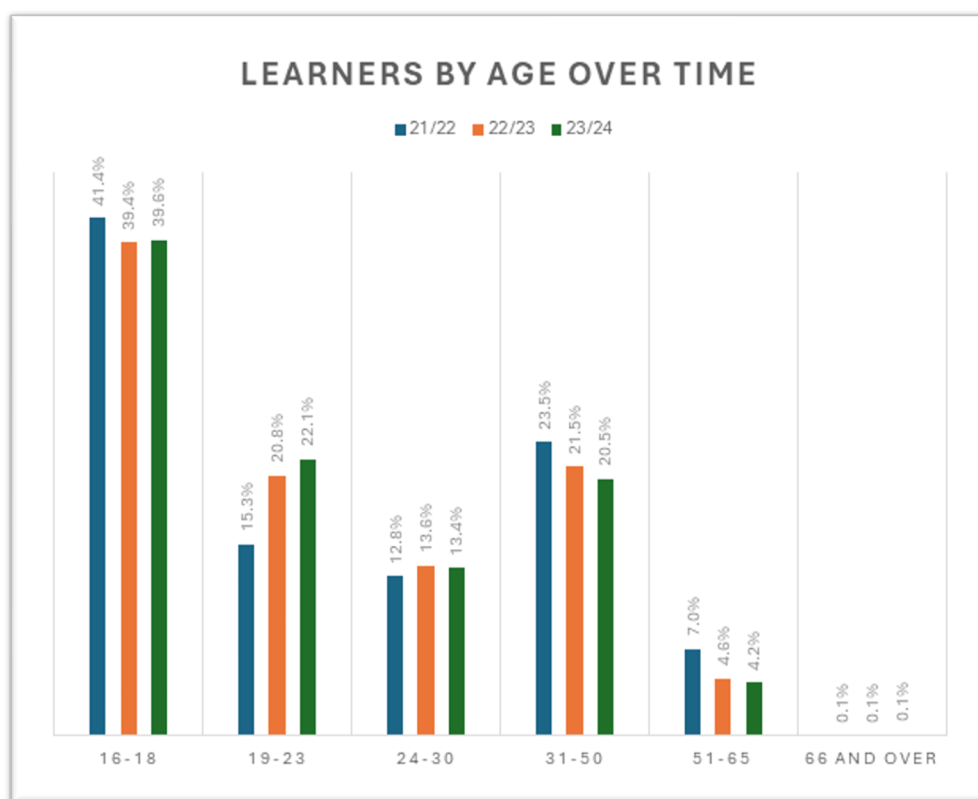
9.1.2. Sex and Gender Identity

Over the past three years, whilst not significant, we've noticed a slight change in the biological sex of our overall cohort of learners, with a small decline in the number of female learners from 39.5% to 36.1%. For our study programme learners, the ratio has remained stable, with an approximately equal balance of male and females.

However, for our apprentices, there is a significant imbalance, with just over a quarter being female. This reflects the proportion of our adult and apprentice learners in traditionally male-dominated industries. The college is actively working with employers and partners, such as Women in Construction and Girls in Tech to challenge these stereotypes, although this is a broader societal issue.

In the academic year 2024/25, we have enhanced our approach to collecting gender data by extending the categories available. This improvement allows us to capture a more comprehensive and inclusive picture of our learners' gender identities, ensuring that everyone feels represented and acknowledged and to help us better understand and support their diverse needs.

Figure 15: Biological Sex – 3-year Trend
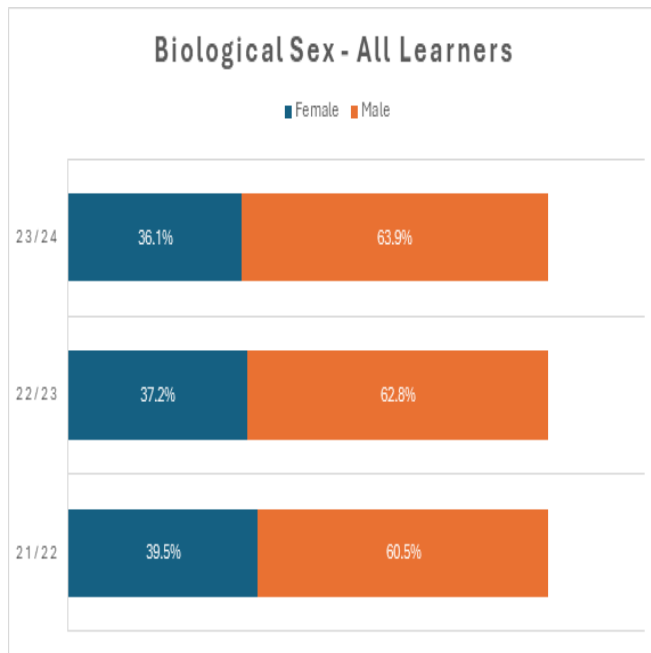
Learners have the option to tell us their preferred pronouns as an expression of their gender identity. Over the last 3 years we have improved the response rates for these questions moving from 98% unknown to 32% unknown in 2023/24. Most learners use the traditional pronouns he/him or she/her, though more learners are using different pronouns. Of the learners who disclose this information 1.7% express a pronoun other than the traditional he/him or she/her. In the 2021 Census a total of 262,000 people (0.5%) answered "No", indicating that their gender identity was different from their sex registered at birth, with 16 to 24 year olds being the most likely to identify as trans or non-binary. Table 1 shows all learners including "unknown". College staff endeavour to use preferred pronouns and the college systems use "known as" to reduce the chance of deadnaming or misgendering learners.

Table 1: Pronouns – All Learners

Pronoun	21/22	%	22/23	%	23/24	%
He/They	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	26	0.3%
She/They	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	13	0.2%
Ze/Zie/They	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	0.0%
He/Him	60	0.8%	3546	42.8%	3515	42.6%
She/Her	51	0.6%	2023	24.4%	1945	23.6%
They/Them	5	0.1%	64	0.8%	50	0.6%
Unknown	7828	98.5%	2657	32.0%	2689	32.6%

Table 2 shows the percentage of pronoun use for learners who did declare their pronouns at application.

Table 2: Pronouns – Pronouns declared at application

| Pronoun	21/22	%	22/23	%	23/24	%
He/They	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	26	0.5%
She/They	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	13	0.2%
Ze/Zie/They	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	0.1%
He/Him	60	51.7%	3546	62.9%	3515	63.3%
She/Her	51	44.0%	2023	35.9%	1945	35.0%
They/Them	5	4.3%	64	1.1%	50	0.9%

9.1.3. Sexual Orientation

A large proportion (52%) of Gateshead College learners have not disclosed their sexual orientation (figure 16).

For the whole learner population, 44% identify as heterosexual/straight, 2% as bisexual, and less than 1% in any other category. Additionally, 0.13% of learners preferred not to say.

Among those who disclosed their sexual orientation or stated they preferred not to say (48% of the population), 92.3% identify as heterosexual/straight, 4.3% as bisexual, 1.1% as a gay man, and 1.2% as a gay woman. 0.3% of learners preferred not to say.

Figure 16: Sexual Orientation – All Learners
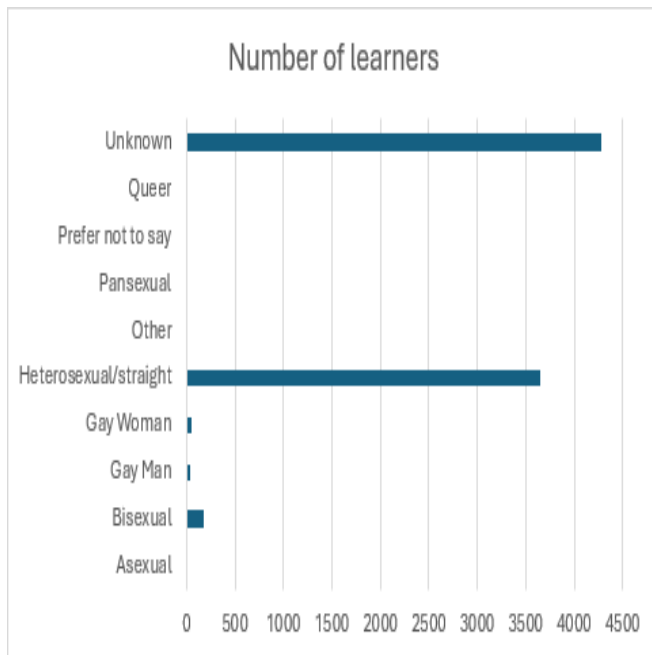
We recognise that a significant number of learners have not disclosed their sexual orientation and want to understand the reasons behind this, considering factors such as the effectiveness of data collection processes, the optional nature of the question, concerns about confidentiality, and individual preferences for privacy.

From those who have disclosed, we can see diversity in our learner population in terms of sexual orientation. This reflects the importance we place on better understanding and supporting our LGBTQIA+ community through our work and we will continue to focus on this.

9.1.4.   Religion & Belief

The College has learners who follow a range of religions and beliefs. Data collection about learners' religion and belief is optional and around 50% of our learners do not provide this information, of those that do, the single largest group are those who identify as non-religious (atheist, humanist). Table 3 provides numeric details of how learners define their beliefs.

Table 3: Religion and Belief – All Learners

Religion	21/22	%	22/23	%	23/24	%
Buddhist	6	0.1%	5	0.1%	18	0.2%
Christian	630	7.9%	281	3.4%	1141	13.8%
Hindu	8	0.1%	6	0.1%	19	0.2%
Jewish	29	0.4%	25	0.3%	40	0.5%
Muslim	99	1.2%	39	0.5%	409	5.0%
Non– religious (atheist, humanist)	1397	17.6%	667	8.0%	2260	27.4%
Prefer not to say	211	2.7%	101	1.2%	7	0.1%
Sikh	3	0.0%	2	0.0%	8	0.1%
Unknown	5561	70.0%	7165	86.4%	4340	52.7%

9.1.5. Disability

The number of learners who declare a learning difficulty or disability (LLDD) has remained steady over time, with about a quarter of our learners declaring a disability or difficulty. We are committed to supporting these learners by continuously investing resources and making reasonable adjustments to meet their needs (figure 17).
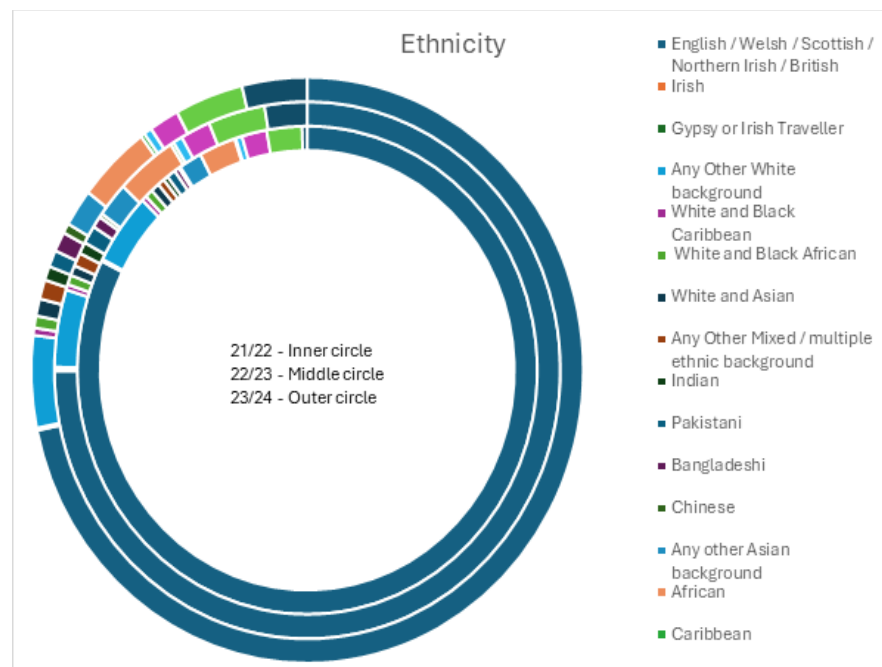
Figure 17: Learning Difficulty/Disability – 3-year trend
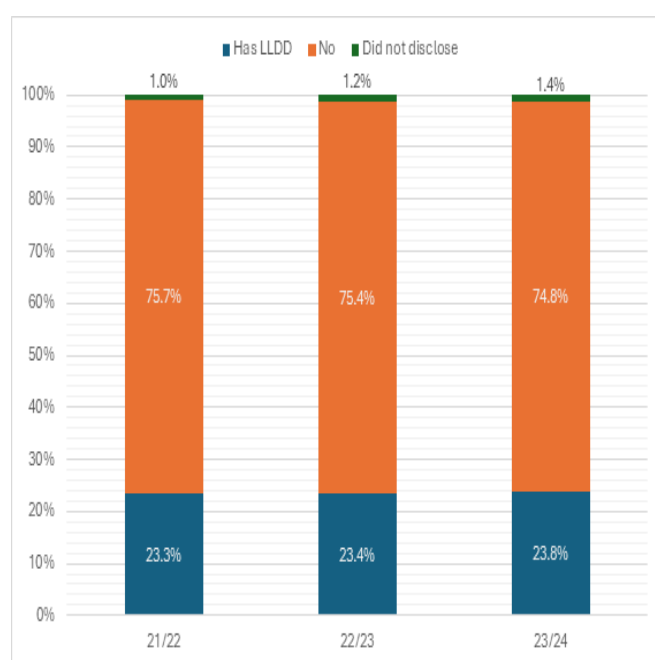
9.1.6. Ethnicity

Our college population is becoming more ethnically diverse, with the proportion of learners identifying as White British (English/Welsh/Scotting/Northern Irish) declining from 82.4% to 71.7% over the last 3 academic years (figure 18).

Figure 18: Ethnicity – 3-year Trend

9.1.7. Learner Voice

Learners are at the centre of what we do and we ensure that we reflect their views in our decision making. We gather this in a variety of ways, from our Student Governors to our Course Reps and Student Leadership Group, Learner Journey Reviews, focus groups and surveys. Feedback from our annual End of Year Survey showed the following over a 3 year trend (table 4):

Table 4: Learner Feedback – 3-year Trend

Year	The College is a safe place to learn, and I feel safe at college (%)	All students are treated fairly (%)	People of all cultures and backgrounds are valued here (%)	I feel free to be myself in college (%)	I am more resilient now that I was at the start of my course (%)
23/24	97.1	92.9	98.6	95.3	91.8
22/23	95.3	90.2	97.6	93.4	90.6
21/22	98.1	93.6	Did not ask	Did not ask	94.2

In 2023/2024, the College established the structure of the Student Representative System, illustrated in figure 18.

There were 162 active Course Representatives, the highest number of learners participating in a central learner voice structure in many years. A differentiated approach to departmental panel meetings for ESOL, Project Choice and the Jewish Girls Academy was put in place to ensure the needs of those students are met and their voices and experiences of the college heard.

Figure 18: Student Representative System
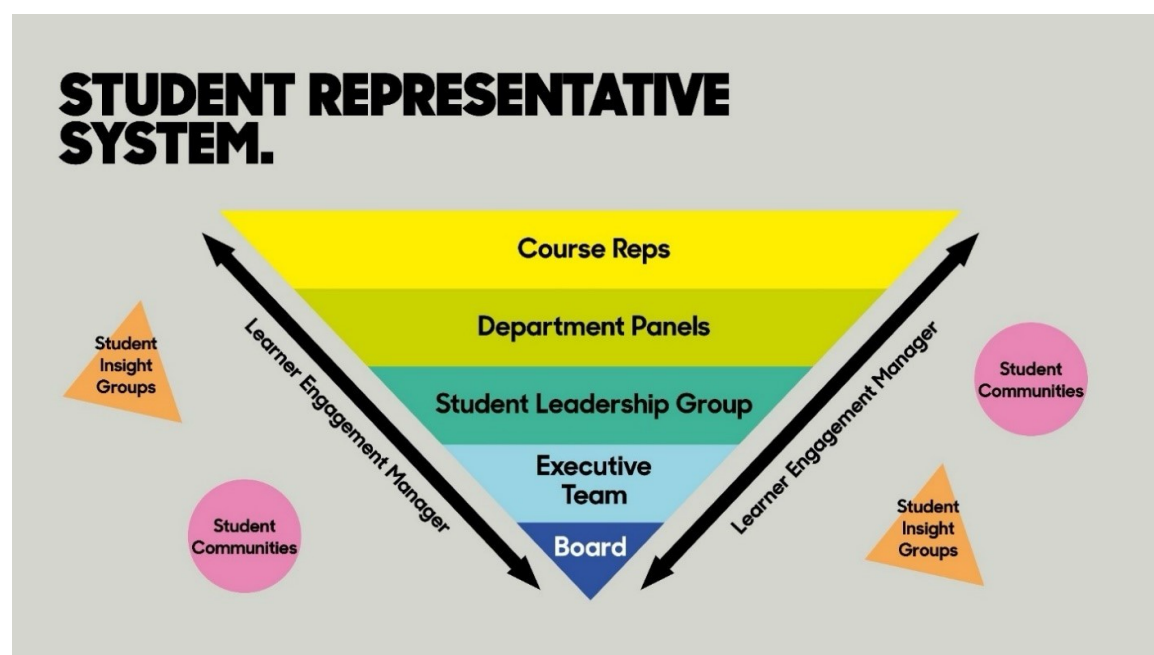
9.1.8. Narrowing Performance Gaps

9.1.8.1. Age

Our 16–18-year-olds and 19+ learners in Education and Training (E&T) consistently achieve rates that are above the most recently published National Rates. In the academic year 2023/24, our 16–18-year-olds achieved 84.8%, which is 3.4% above the most recent National Rate. Our 19+ learners achieved higher at 87.9% (table 5). This is largely due to the higher proportion of short programmes of learning undertaken by adults, which tend to have higher achievement rates.

Table 5: Learner Achievement Rates

Age Group	Level	Leavers	Achievers	Achievement Rate %	Provider NR %	Diff to PNR %
					National Rates 2022-23	
16-18	All Qual Levels	7087	3661	84.8	81.4	3.4
19+	All Qual Levels	7087	6232	89.2	86.8	2.4

Table 6: Apprentice Achievement Rates

Age Group	Achievement Rate %	Provider NR %	Diff to PNR %
16-18	69.2	56.3	12.9
19+	60.7	54.1	6.6

9.1.8.2. Qualification Levels

The college performs better than the national rates at levels 2 and 3 for all age groups for Education and Training programmes and departmental Quality Improvement Plans are in place to address the gap at Level 1 (table 7).

Table 7: Learner Achievement Rates by Qualification Level

Gateshead College 2023/24					National Rates 2022-23	
Age Group	Level	Leavers	Achievers	Achievement Rate %	Provider NR %	Diff to PNR %
16-18	Entry & 1	1318	971	73.7	80.6	-6.9
16-18	2	1316	1154	87.7	80.1	7.6
16-18	3	1683	1536	91.3	83	8.3
19+	Entry & 1	5634	5001	88.8	89	-0.2
19+	2	1239	1061	85.6	84.1	1.5
19+	3	214	170	79.44	77.4	2.04

All Apprentice levels are significantly above national Provider rates (table 8).

Table 8: Apprentice Achievement Rates by Qualification Level

Gateshead College 2023-24	Achievement Rate %		Provider NR %	Diff to PNR %
Level 2 – Intermediate	66.7		54.1	12.6
Level 3 Advanced	63.3		55.3	8
Level 4+ Higher	65		49.3	15.7
All Levels	64.5		54.6	9.9

9.1.8.3. Gender

There is little difference between the achievement rates of female and male learners aged 16-18, with female learners performing marginally better than males. For adult learners, the achievement rates vary due to the higher number of males in high-performing short programmes and the greater number of females in challenging one-year Higher Education programmes. A summary by gender is displayed below (table 9):

Table 9: Learner Achievement Rates by Gender

Gateshead College 2023/24				
Age Group	Sex	Leavers	Achievers	Achievement Rate %
16-18	Female	2076	1778	85.7
19+	Female	2030	1969	85.5
16-18	Male	2241	1883	84
19+	Male	4784	4263	89.1

9.1.8.4. Disability/ Learning Difficulty

In 2023/24 those declaring a learning difficulty or disability achieved at a rate of 85%, compared to those who did not declare a learning difficulty or disability who achieved at a rate of 87.5%. The split by age group is shown below (table 10):

Table 10: Learner Achievement Rates by Learning Difficulty or Disability

Age Group	Achievement rate – With Learning Difficulty or Disability (%)	Achievement rate – With Learning No Difficulty or Disability (%)
16-18	82.4	86.1
19+	87.3	88.2

193 learners had an Education Healthcare Plan (EHCP) in 2023/24. These learners achieved at 88.7% which is 3.9% above the college average achievement rate for 16–18-year-olds, and 1.9% above the whole college average of 86.8%.

The achievement rates for different declared ethnicities are shown in table 11 (the enrolment numbers for some ethnicities is low):

Table 11: Learner Achievement Rates by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Leavers (Enrolments)	Ach Overall %
African	637	80.38
Arab	311	75.56
Bangladeshi	102	87.25
Caribbean	22	90.91
Chinese	94	84.04
Gypsy/Irish Traveller	4	100
Indian	57	85.96
Irish	5	100
Not Provided	330	84.24
Other	754	80.77
Other Asian	367	82.29
Other Black	56	78.57
Other Mixed	130	85.38
Other White	640	90
Pakistani	81	91.36
White British	4484	91.06
White/Asian	155	80.65
White/Black African	62	85.48
White/Black Caribbean	26	96.15

The college has a large cohort of ESOL Learners (869 distinct learners in 2023/24), who have a significant diversity in educational backgrounds prior to joining us. The table below (table 12) shows the overall college average achievement for all ethnicities including ESOL provision. The table also shows the college average with ESOL excluded and the college average for all ethnicities excluding White British (Global Majority learners), it indicates that Global Majority learners achieve marginally better than the college average.

Table 12: Learner Achievement Rates – ESOL

All Ethnicities	Ach Overall %	Diff to College Average (%)
All Levels in ESOL (college average)	86.4	–
All Levels excluding ESOL	88.2	1.6
All Levels, all Ethnicities excluding White British & ESOL	86.8	0.4

9.1.8.6. Areas of Disadvantage

We're committed to raising the aspirations and expectations of learners facing socio-economic barriers recognising the profile of our local area.

More than half of our learners come from the 20% most deprived areas according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The map below shows areas of deprivation by colour, with dark reds indicating the most deprived deciles (figure 19/20)[5]. We take targeted action to address this through our curriculum and support services and are very proud that we are high performing in terms of student achievement rates, especially considering the diverse backgrounds and barriers facing some of our learners.
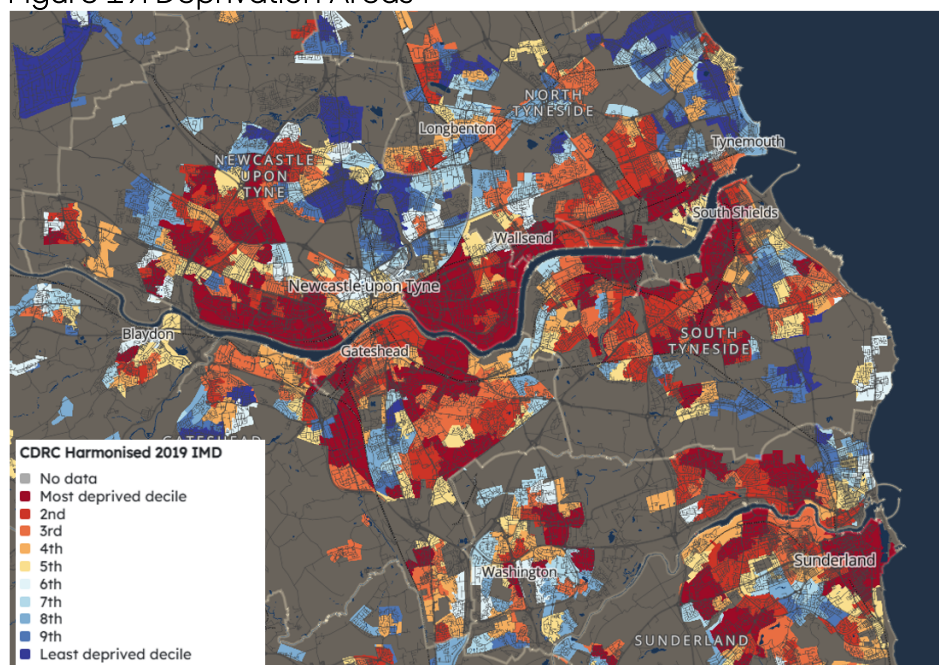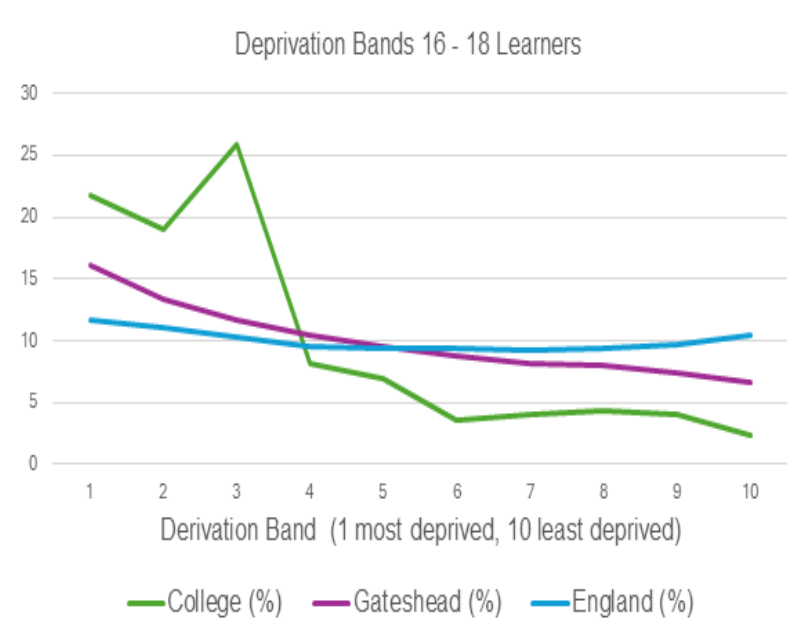
Figure 19: Deprivation Areas

Figure 20: Deprivation Bands

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[5] (An output of the Consumer Date Research Centre, on ESRC Data Investment, ES/L011840/1;ES/L011891/1)

Deprivation Bands 16 - 18 Learners

Derivation Band (1 most deprived, 10 least deprived)

—College (%) —Gateshead (%) —England (%)

9.1.8.7. Free College Meals

In 2023/2024, 461 learners were supported with free college meals bursaries at a cost of £122,723.81 from bursary funds.

Thresholds to qualify are high and can only be awarded when learners or parents/carers are in receipt of one of the below:

- Income support

- Universal credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per year (after tax and not including any benefits received)

- Income based Jobseekers Allowance

- Income related Employment Support Allowance

- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit

- Child Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of less than £16,190 as assessed by HMRC. If in receipt of Working Tax Credits, you are not entitled for free meals, regardless of income amount.

- Working Tax Credit run-on paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit

87.3% of learners who were eligible for Free Meals achieved their programmes, which is 0.6% above the college average.

9.1.8.8. Higher Rate Bursary

69 learners were in receipt of the Higher Rate Bursary in 2023/24. These learners are often vulnerable due to their history or current status. This could include them being care experienced or a care leaver, receiving Income Support or both Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments. £68,320.99 was spent in 2023/24 supporting these learners to travel to college and to provide resources.

9.1.8.9. The Gateshead College Foundation

The college created the Gateshead College Foundation to offer students additional grants on top of the other financial bursaries available, to help them get the most out of their studies.

Learners can apply for money to help with:

- Travel costs.

- Equipment to help on course

- Cash to help learners get to auditions, interviews or university visits.

- Entry and travel to competitions.

- Placement opportunities.

- Experiences that help learners develop their skills or inspire them in their future career.

The Foundation's main purpose is to ensure learners have access to education and opportunities to gain skills and experience to improve their 'Employment Edge'.

In 2023/24, £60,482 was awarded to support learners.

9.1.9. Safeguarding, Welfare and Wellbeing

Considering safeguarding and welfare referrals data in relation to protected characteristics is crucial in ensuring that all learners receive the support they need and that there are no groups of learners who are being discriminated against or disadvantaged. We analyse this data so we can identify any disparities or patterns that may exist, allowing us to address potential issues proactively. This approach helps us create a safer and more inclusive environment, where every learner feels valued and protected and enables us to tailor our interventions and support services to meet the diverse needs of our learner community, so that no one is left behind.

9.1.9.1. Students with Special Educational Needs

In 2023/24 137 (74%) of the 184 referrals related to students who had a declared need recorded against them. 35 learners were from our Project Choice provision for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities (23.64%).

9.1.9.2. Ethnicity

From 184 referrals 151 (82%) were recorded as English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British (White). The remaining referrals represented various ethnic backgrounds across different curriculum areas, but their small numbers make further meaningful analysis difficult.

9.1.9.3. Age

137 referrals (74.45%) were for students aged 16 –18. In the 2023/24 academic year, more students over the age of 18 received support compared to previous years, indicating that the newly formed safeguarding and wellbeing team is effectively reaching beyond the typical student demographic.

9.1.9.4. Welfare and Wellbeing

2023/24 was the first full academic year with a Welfare and Wellbeing team in place. They dealt with 402 wellbeing referrals from students and curriculum teams across the college. The team also support care experienced students and students who are open to a plan such as child protection or child in need.