



Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy

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Version Level	Details of Change	Date
01	New document	10/10/2002
02	Full review, re-write new template and logo,	18/10/2007
03	Full re-write and modernisation to reflect current practice and title change (Previously Equal Opportunities Policy)	16/11/2010
04	Change of template	01/02/2012
05	Reviewed and updated	30/03/2012
06	Reviewed to reflect changes in management	31/10/2012
07	Reviewed and updated	02/12/2013
08	Reviewed and updated	31/03/2014
09	Reviewed and updated. Explanation of each protected characteristic added and changes to staff titles and responsibilities.	29/04/2016
10	Reviewed and updated	10/01/2018
11	Reviewed and updated	28/01/2019
12	Reviewed and updated. Provided additional details of complaint categories.	23/01/2020
13	Updated Index of Multiple Deprivations	03/02/2021
14	Updated staff titles to reflect new staff structures	29/09/2021
15	Updated to remove out of date or unnecessary information and streamline wording	Drafted May 2023
16	New template and structure in line with full policy review	28/11/2023
17	Full re-write and modernisation, including title change (Previously Equality and Diversity Policy), to reflect updated EDIB objectives. Including title change (Previously Equality and Diversity Policy)	30/04/2025

1. Introduction

At Gateshead College, we are committed to creating a culture where diversity is celebrated, inclusion is embedded, and everyone—learners, staff, and partners—feels they truly belong.

We take proactive steps to remove barriers, create opportunities, and ensure that every individual is valued, heard, and supported to achieve their full potential.

Playing a vital role in our local community, we champion equity and inclusion within our college and beyond, ensuring our people and partners thrive in an environment of fairness, respect, and opportunity.

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2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, learners, officers, consultants, self-employed contractors, casual workers, agency workers, apprentices, volunteers and interns. The obligations and duties under this policy and procedure also extend to job applicants, former staff and former learners. It covers all areas of the College's business.

The Board of Governors has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but has delegated responsibility for overseeing its implementation to the People Team. The People Team has day to day responsibility for this policy and any queries concerning the policy should be addressed to the People Team in the first instance.

3. Commitments

The aim of this document is to provide a framework which sets out the College's commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive environment free from discrimination, where individuals feel safe and can work effectively, competently and confidently. Unlawful and unfair discrimination will not be tolerated at any level within the College.

This policy supports the College's values, in particular the aim of respecting others and the workplace environment.

The College commits to the following aims:

- promoting equality of opportunity for everyone
- creating a workforce that's representative of our community
- valuing all our staff and learners for their contribution and celebrating diversity in all aspects of the College
- creating a genuinely inclusive workplace, where similarities and differences are embraced
- supporting the unique and diverse needs of our learners and our community
- making sure that our suppliers and partners actively support the College in having a diverse and inclusive culture and can demonstrate this
- playing a vital role in championing equality and inclusion in our local community

4. What is Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

Equality is ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. It means, for example that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, what, or whom they were born, what they believe, or whether they have a disability.

Diversity is recognising, respecting, and valuing the differences between people. It involves understanding that each individual is unique and appreciating our individual differences, which can include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.

Inclusion is engaging the uniqueness, talents, beliefs, backgrounds, abilities and ways of working of everyone who works, learns and partners with the College. It's also about working together to create a culture where everyone feels valued and respected.

Belonging is fostering a sense of acceptance and community within the College. It means creating a culture where individuals feel they are an integral part of the College, where their presence and contributions are appreciated, and where they feel connected to the College values.

5. Legal framework

The Equality Act 2010 brings together laws that protect people from discrimination. It covers nine protected characteristics, which are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Equality Act 2010 also put in place a single public sector equality duty, which gives public authorities a legal responsibility to provide this protection and make decisions which are fair and transparent, including the allocation of public money.

The single public sector equality duty requires the College to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations

6. Your Responsibilities

Everyone at the College is responsible for their own behaviour and for acting in line with the principles in this policy. All staff are expected to actively help prevent discrimination. We all have a duty to treat others with respect and recognise that our views and opinions may not always be the same as our colleagues.

Any prejudice, discrimination, or extremist views, including the use of derogatory language displayed by learners, staff, visitors or partners will always be challenged and where appropriate dealt with using the relevant disciplinary procedure. If necessary, the College will refer concerns about extremism to external agencies such as the Police or local authority.

The College does not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form, by or towards anyone covered by this policy. Behaviour expectations are outlined in the Employee Code of Conduct (for staff) and the Student Code of Conduct (for learners).

The procedures for raising and resolving bullying, harassment and sexual harassment complaints are:

For staff:

- Preventing Bullying and Harassment Procedure
- Preventing Sexual Harassment Procedure

For learners:

- Student Harassment/Sexual Harassment and Bullying Procedure

If someone believes they have experienced discrimination, harassment, or victimisation, the College will take their concern seriously. All complaints, including those raised by whistleblowers, will be handled in line with the relevant procedure.

7. Embedding EDIB Culture

To support the College's commitment to Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB), this policy is implemented through the following actions:

- Embedding EDIB into strategies, policies and procedures, leadership, and decision-making, with clear accountability and regular progress updates.
- Strengthening and promoting accessible reporting systems for discrimination, bullying, and harassment - ensuring action is taken so that everyone feels safe, respected and supported.
- Training staff and leaders to recognise and address bias, foster inclusive behaviours and value different perspectives.
- Celebrating diversity through events, campaigns and initiatives that promote understanding and challenge bias.
- Developing workforce, curriculum and student plans that champion fairness, transparency and working together and support inclusive recruitment, progression and retention – helping the College reflect the diversity of its community.
- Providing meaningful opportunities for staff and students to share feedback, contribute lived experiences and influence positive change.
- Using data to monitor progress and inform actions to close equity gaps - particularly for individuals facing multiple or intersectional disadvantages.

The EDIB Steering Group will develop an annual College action plan, based on the EDIB Commitment Statement and Objectives. The action plan will track progress and assign accountability while allowing flexibility to adapt over time.

8. Related Documents

- Preventing Harassment and Bullying Policy (Staff)
- Preventing Sexual Harassment Policy (Staff)
- Student Harassment/Bullying Procedure
- Feedback and Complaints Procedure
- Grievance Procedure (Staff)

- Employee Code of Conduct
- Student Code of Conduct
- Prevent Policy
- EDIB Commitment Statement and Objectives
- Strategic Plan