



HEART OF WORCESTERSHIRE COLLEGE

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Annual Report 2023/24

97% of our learners stated they are treated with respect in College.

[HOWCOLLEGE.AC.UK](https://howcollege.ac.uk)



HEART OF
WORCESTERSHIRE
COLLEGE

Our Commitment and Intent

Heart of Worcestershire College has a proactive and positive approach to Equality and Diversity.

We aim to go beyond our statutory duty.

Overview of equality legislation

Public Sector general and specific duties:

The general equality duty as detailed in the Equality Act 2010 requires us to give due regard to:

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

Meeting the needs of Learners

Heart of Worcestershire College strives to be an outstanding inclusive college and ensures that learners' needs are assessed and responded to appropriately and effectively. An essential part of the College experience for a learner is to be prepared for working and living in a diverse society.

- All teaching and training resources reflect and promote Equality and Diversity as appropriate to raise awareness and understanding.
- Staff will actively promote British Values throughout college life and empower students to challenge stereotypes, assumptions and discrimination within a culture of mutual respect and tolerance for others. Admission processes and initial assessments are used to ensure that the correct support is available

to learners at the beginning of their course. Learners are given opportunities throughout the year to disclose any disabilities or other protected characteristic they may have.

- Information, guidance and support is delivered in ways accessible to different groups with protected characteristics and in ways that challenge stereotypes.

Learners are able to access support from a range of staff including Safeguarding and Wellbeing Officers, Personal Tutors, Personal Learning Coaches, Learning Support Assistants and Academic Skills Support Mentors to reduce barriers to achievement.

Financial support is available to assist learners who may have difficulties in completing their course due to financial reasons.

The Learner Voice process is designed to be a crucial mechanism for understanding and responding to the learner experience to ensure that the College is inclusive in all aspects of the service it delivers.

There are extensive policies in place for equality and diversity that are fully embedded into all procedures and practices e.g. recruitment of staff and learners. The College's observation feedback requires that observers make a judgement on the promotion of Equality and Diversity within the learning activity.

OUR VISION. OUR VALUES.

2023 - 2028 STRATEGY

MISSION

Improve lives through learning

VISION

HoW College is recognised for nurturing the brilliance of every student & addressing the skills needs of local and regional employers, through innovative & impactful education

STRATEGIC THEMES							
	PURPOSE	PLACE	PEOPLE	PROSPER	PARTNERSHIP	POTENTIAL	PLANET
How will we achieve our vision?	Providing a high-quality curriculum, focussed on careers and the delivery of excellent outcomes for all.	Delivering from inspirational and safe learning environments.	Offering a culture of support, kindness and engagement for staff and students with high expectations of ourselves and others.	Focussing on appropriate growth opportunities and efficient and effective delivery.	Being an anchor institution for Worcestershire employers and our communities.	Preserve and innovate today to thrive tomorrow, ensuring we meet skills needs and have a reputation for technological advancement.	Raising awareness of, and delivering on, our sustainability commitment.
OUR AMBITION							
When will we know we have achieved this?	Top quartile results.	Estates strategy implemented.	Recognised in Times Best Companies.	Achieve FE Commissioner EBITDA recommendations.	Extensive list of employers engaged in every curriculum area for design, development and delivery. Stakeholder feedback.	Recognised as STRONG for skills and industry leaders in technology.	Reduce carbon footprint by 50% by 2030.



OUR VISION. OUR VALUES.

VALUES

#HOWCARES

Honest
Optimistic
Welcoming
Collaborative
Ambitious
Respectful
Empowering
Supportive



Honest	We are open and transparent and recognise, accept and take action when things aren't working or would benefit from change. We are confident to respectfully challenge others.
Optimistic	We see opportunities in challenge. We are positive and passionate about our College and the communities we serve, and are aspirational for our students.
Welcoming	We create positive first impressions and foster loyalty.
Collaborative	We work as a team and leverage diverse skills and perspectives. We pursue partnerships to benefit the communities we serve.
Ambitious	We seek to improve, build on our strengths and expand. We are innovative and consistently encourage and inspire our colleagues and students to achieve their best.
Respectful	We value all contributors, acknowledge diverse opinions and foster inclusion.
Empowering	We delegate authority and encourage decision-making and initiative, to increase engagement and productivity. Through fostering a culture of accountability, we promote resilience in a no-blame culture.
Supportive	We help others with empathy and kindness at our core. We are responsive, enabling colleagues, students and stakeholders to find solutions and achieve.

Equality and Diversity in Worcestershire

Worcestershire is a varied and diverse county with a total population of 603,600 people of which 295,800 (49%) are male and 307,900 (51%) are female [sic data.worcestershire.gov]. 16% of the population is aged 0-14, 61% aged 15-64 and 23% aged 65+. Since the previous census in 2011 the county has seen an increase in population of 37,431 reported in the 2021 census.

The number of people from an ethnic minority groups in Worcestershire is almost 68,200., around 11.3% of the population. This is notably lower than the national average of over 26%. The proportion of ethnic minority groups in the county in 2021 has grown from 7.6% in 2011. Proportions of ethnic minorities are relatively high in Redditch and Worcester. Proportions of ethnic minorities in all districts are lower than the average across the whole of England. The population of 'Other White' ethnic group now represents almost 25,500 people, the 2nd largest ethnic group in the county. It contains many people from Europe including eastern Europe.

2021 Census results show that 18% of people in Worcestershire are disabled under the Equality Act, representing almost 109,000 people.

There were 890 Children Looked After (CLA) in Worcestershire as of 31 March 2022. This represents a rate of 75.0 per 10,000 children aged 0-17, higher than the national average (70.0) and average among statistical neighbours (55.1). Children in Need (CIN) rate is 293.6 per 10,000 in 2022, lower than the national average (334.3 per 10,000) but slightly higher than the average across statistical neighbours (286.25 per 10,000). Over 41% of Children in Need in Worcestershire have been in need for 2 years or more. Children in Need in Worcestershire have a lower attainment than national and statistical neighbours at both KS2 and KS4. In 2022 there was a slightly lower percentage of pupils in Worcestershire schools with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) at 3.9% than both the national average and the average among statistical neighbours, both of which were 4%. However, proportions have increased from 2.9% in 2016, which is in line with increasing national trends 42 along with an increase in the complexity of needs.

(www.worcestershire.gov.uk)

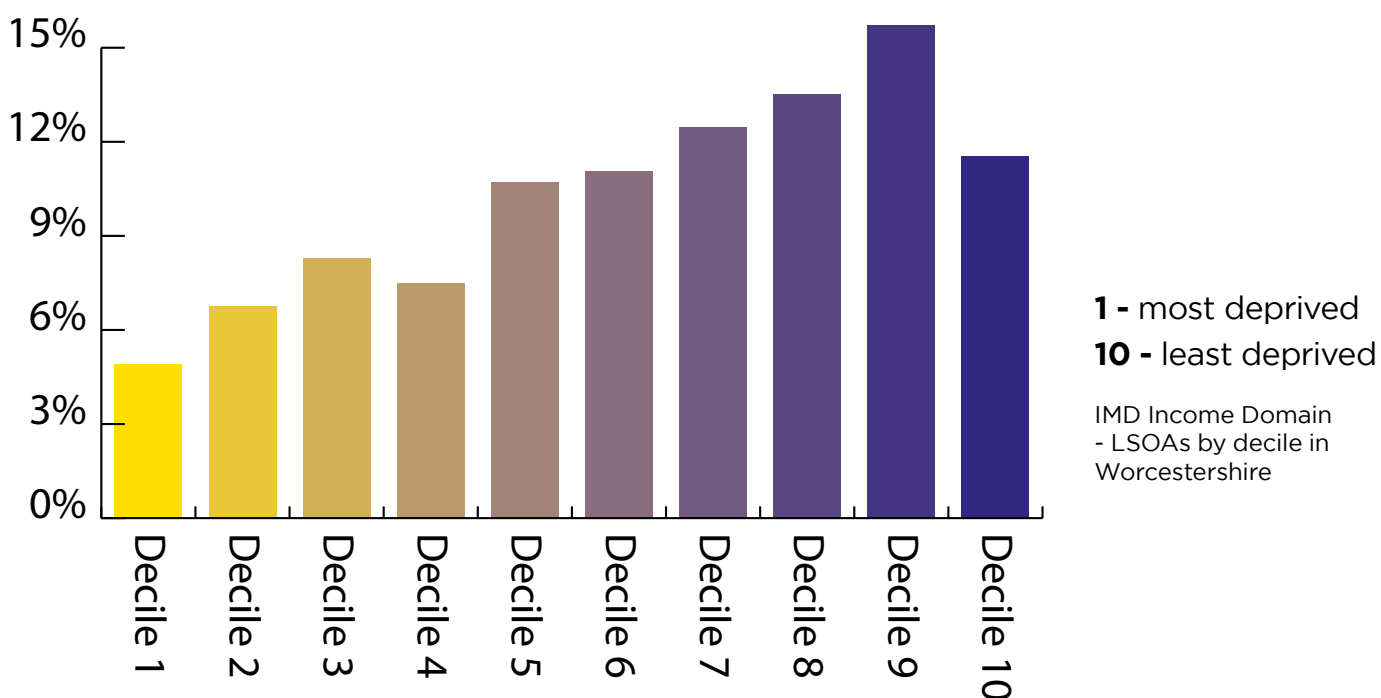
Index of Multiple Deprivation| Worcestershire

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas (or neighbourhoods) in England. The IMD ranks every small area (Lower Super Output Area) in England from 1 (most deprived) to 32,844 (least deprived). For larger areas we can look at the proportion of LSOAs within the area that lie within each decile. Decile 1 represents the most deprived 10% of LSOAs in England while decile 10 shows the least deprived 10% of LSOAs.

Index of Multiple Deprivation

Date: 2019

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) combines information from seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation. The domains are: Income; Employment; Education; Skills and Training; Health and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing Services; Living Environment. Each domain is given a weighting and is based on a basket of indicators.





This dataset provides Census 2021 estimates that classify households in England and Wales by four dimensions of deprivation: Employment, education, health and disability, and household overcrowding. The dimensions of deprivation used to classify households are indicators based on four selected household characteristics.

- Education - A household is classified as deprived in the education dimension if no one has at least level 2 education and no one aged 16 to 18 years is a full-time student.
- Employment - A household is classified as deprived in the employment dimension if any member, not a full-time student, is either unemployed or disabled.
- Health - A household is classified as deprived in the health dimension if any member is disabled.
- Housing - A household is classified as deprived in the housing dimension if the household's accommodation is either overcrowded, in a shared dwelling, or has no central heating.

Almost a half of households in Worcestershire are classified as deprived in at least one dimension. This is slightly lower than the national average of 51.6% and represents almost 129,100 households across the county.

- Proportions of households that are deprived in at least one dimension are particularly high in Wyre Forest, at just over 54%, and Redditch, at just over 53%. Proportions are lowest in Bromsgrove, at just over 45%.
- Just over 16% of households in Worcestershire, representing over 41,800 households, are deprived in at least two dimensions. This is lower than the national average of just over 18%. At a district level, proportions are particularly high in Wyre Forest and Redditch, each at around 19%. • Almost 9,000 households in Worcestershire are deprived across three dimensions, representing just over 3% of all households. This is lower than the average across England of almost 4%. Proportions are relatively high in Wyre Forest, Redditch, and Worcester.
- Just under 460 households in Worcestershire are deprived across all 4 dimensions. This represents 0.2% of all households, similar to the national rate. Proportions are highest at a district level in Redditch.

Our Partners



Employers

Equality and Diversity is monitored with our sub-contracting partners on a regular basis through the following methods:

- Audit and compliance checks
- Observation of teaching, learning and assessment (including joint observations with partner leadership and management team)
- Review of policies, procedures, strategies and staff development records (areas for improvement are addressed at senior leadership level with action plans agreed, where required).

Within College a question bank has been developed to target specific vocational sectors with relevant and current topics for discussion during progress reviews. The outcome of these reviews is monitored through the audit and quality monitoring process. The College observation process will also capture evidence of the promotion of Equality and Diversity during work-based assessment and progress reviews.

Our Partner Agencies

Heart of Worcestershire College strives to be inclusive in all aspects of the services it delivers and recognises the importance of strong relationships with the community. With this in mind we practice a collaborative approach to keeping our students safe with external agencies.





Our Policies

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Equality, diversity and inclusion is central to the College's overarching plans, as set out in its Strategic Plan, and is embedded throughout the College in many ways such as sharing and celebrating good practice and participation and consultation.

The Equality Action Plan sets out the strategy for establishing how the College intends to ensure equality for all and build upon existing practice. It is intended to be flexible to respond to new developments and changes in legislation, and was reviewed and updated on a regular basis, with the continuing involvement of college learners, staff, partners and community groups. Progress was reported twice yearly to Corporation and monitored through the Equality and Diversity strategic group meetings taking place each term.

The College strives to ensure that all learners enjoy an excellent experience whilst at college and monitors this by analysing data regarding people with a protected characteristic. The EDIMs [Equality and Diversity Impact Measures] are incorporated into the College's Equality Objectives and are reported on to the Senior Leadership Team and College Corporation.

We will provide equality of opportunity for all our learners and staff by:

- Taking effective action to prevent discrimination, harassment or bullying;
- Listening to our learners;
- Providing flexible learning and working opportunities to support differing aspirations and goals;
- Promoting equality of access to all College services;
- Taking all reasonable steps to provide a safe, accessible, inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Our Staff



The HR department has created and updated a number of key policies to continue to contribute and support the College's approach to Equality, Diversity and inclusion.

Volunteering

In keeping with the ethos of the College serving its community, staff are able to request paid time off work in order to undertake volunteer work.

Agile Working Policy

The College supports the adoption of new ways of working, to provide more flexible teams and teamwork enabled by technology, who can work more efficiently to deliver excellent service whilst improving the relationship between work and home life.

The College has recognised the need to develop modern working practices and has invested significantly in technology driven solutions to enable our students,

our work teams and the people within them to maximise their performance and productivity and deliver the greatest value to the organisation, whilst maintaining a good work life balance.

Menopause Policy/Guidance

The College is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment. We aim to create an environment in which all our employees feel informed about the menopause and are comfortable and confident talking about its impact.

The introduction of this new policy sets out the guidelines for members of staff and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work

Wellbeing Support for Staff

The college is committed to the health and wellbeing of its employees, developing a culture where all staff feel valued, motivated, and well informed as well as feeling well equipped to manage their health and wellbeing with support from leaders and managers to perform their roles effectively.

The College is committed to identifying and reducing workplace stressors and encouraging a positive and supportive working environment which actively promotes the wellbeing of all employees. It recognises that the key to managing stress is reliant on good management practice. The College ensures that employee health and wellbeing is at the core of all College activities by having in place a comprehensive combination of wellbeing measures including Occupational Health Services, an Employee Assistance Programme, and a rolling programme of wellbeing and healthy lifestyle events available to all members of staff regardless of job role or level of responsibility.

This approach aims to work in partnership with employees to promote wellbeing, to prevent sick absence wherever possible and to manage cases of sickness absence where they occur, within a constructive framework of policy and procedures.

Within the past two years this commitment has been increasingly evident with a number of additional support measures and implementation of specific activities to promote and encourage the positive health and wellbeing of staff which are further outlined and discussed in the following sections.

The College ensures that employee health and wellbeing is at the core of all college activities. Across both HR and Marketing the teams work in collaboration to implement and promote a programme of health and wellbeing activities and resources to all staff.

The HoW4U reward platform includes a wellbeing platform. As part of this, staff have access to a 24-hour, free telephone counselling service, as part of the Employee Assistance Programme.

The College's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) delivers a person-centred approach to health and wellbeing. Staff engage well with this service with beneficiaries able to access support year on year.

Staff development days have continued to include a wellbeing focus, this is now a key theme for all staff development days so that staff feel supported.

We have introduced a regular newsletter for Mental Health and Wellbeing called - Let's Talk, recent communications have included:

- Suicide Prevention Day
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- Take a PAUSE for Menopause

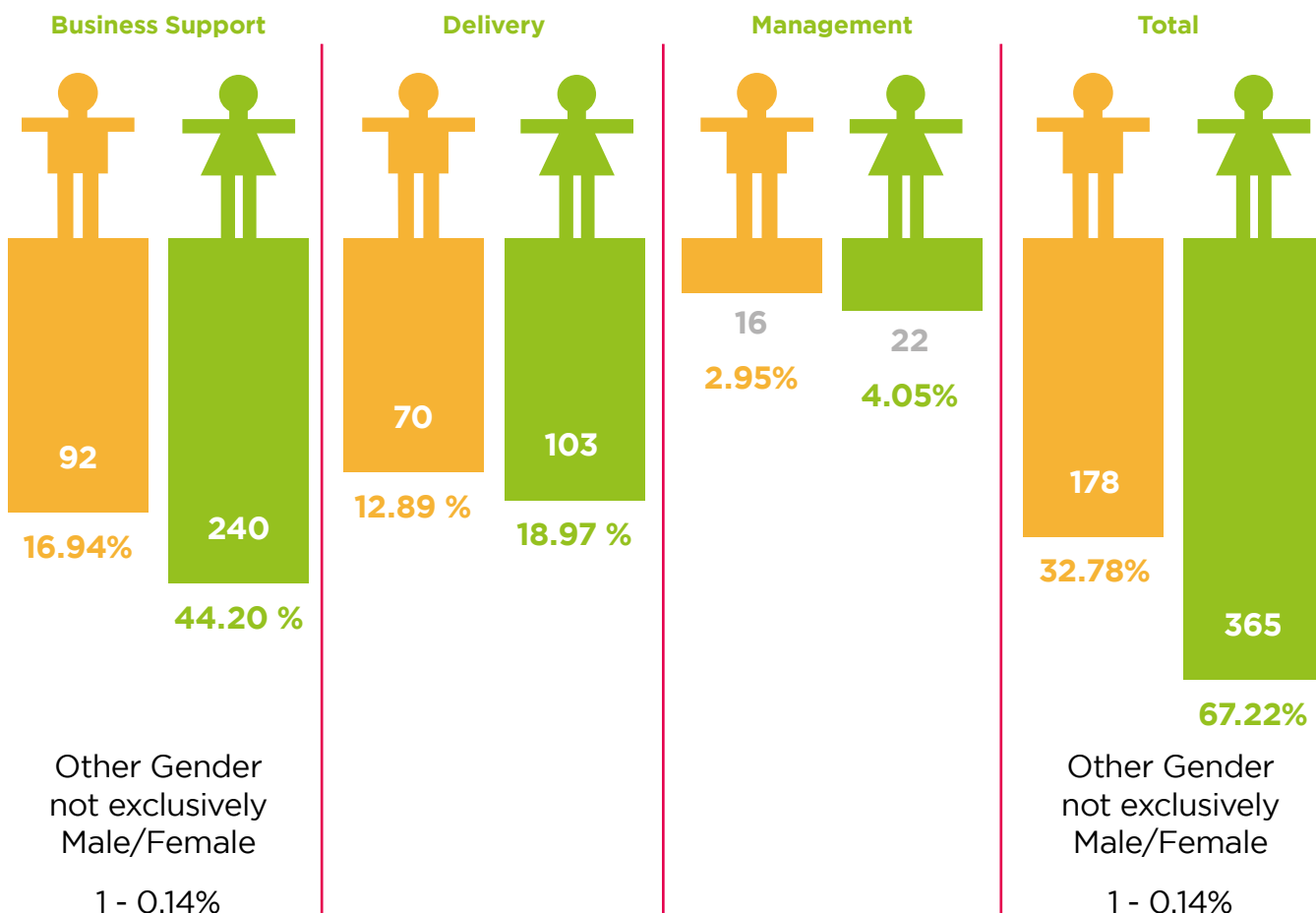
Staffing Profile

Staff Profile 543

2023/24

Staff by gender

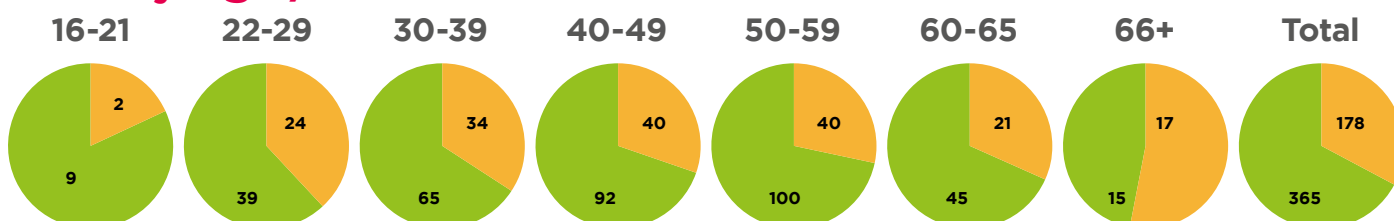
How College is consistent within the sector in terms of 2/3 of staff are female, 1/3 are male, according to the AoC College workforce survey 2017.



Staff by age

	16-21	22-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-65	66+	Total
Business Support	11	51	4	57	81	46	0	332
Delivery	0	12	29	56	44	19	13	173
Management	0	0	3	19	15	1	0	38
Total	11	63	99	132	140	66	32	543
%	2%	12%	18%	24%	26%	12%	6%	

Staff by Age / Gender



Category	Staff by Age / Gender (F)emale / (M)ale / (O)ther														
	16-21			22-29			30-39			40-49			50-59		
	M	F	O	M	F	O	M	F	O	M	F	O	M	F	O
Business	2	9	0	20	31	0	21	46	0	11	46	0	18	63	0
Delivery	0	0	0	4	8	0	13	16	0	20	36	0	15	29	0
Management	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	9	10	0	7	8	0
Total	2	9	0	24	39	0	65	0	0	40	92	0	40	100	0
%	0.37	1.66	0.00	4.42	7.18	0.00	6.26	11.97	0.00	7.37	16.94	0.00	7.37	18.42	0.00

Category	Staff by Age / Gender (F)emale / (M)ale / (O)ther								
	60-65			66+			Total		
	M	F	O	M	F	O	M	F	O
Business	11	35	0	9	10	0	92	240	0
Delivery	10	9	0	8	5	0	70	103	0
Management	0	1	0	0	0	0	16	22	0
Total	21	45	0	17	15	0	178	365	0
%	3.87	8.29	0.00	3.13	2.76	0.00	32.78	67.22	0.00

Staff by disability

Prefer not to say	Yes learning difficulty	Yes physical impairment	Yes rather not say	Yes - Mental ill health	TOTAL
1	5	9	9	1	25

Staff by ethnicity

Our staffing profile is slightly more diverse than the demographic profile of residents of Worcestershire (census 2011) with 86% of our staff identifying as white compared to 95.7% of Worcestershire residents.

Ethnic origin	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other Ethnic Group	White	Not Provided	Total
Business Support	6	3	11	2	277	33	332
Delivery	6	4	4	1	152	6	173
Management	0	0	0	0	37	1	38
Total	12	7	15	3	466	40	543
%	2%	1%	3%	1%	86%	7%	



Gender Pay Gap

Heart of Worcestershire College, in line with many colleges, has more female employees.

The education sector has also always provided a range of flexible working patterns to suit the work/life balance of its staff. At HoW College a greater number of female staff have taken advantage of this flexibility, choosing to work less hours, or taking on term time only contracts. This does impact on Gender Pay Reporting calculations, however we have always, and will continue to support and provide flexible working patterns.

At HoW College we are proud of our diverse and multi-discipline workforce and the range of facilities we provide.

The College is committed to inclusion and the promotion of gender equality. Moving forward, we have continued to keep our HR policies and processes under regular review to ensure we are making steps towards removing any existing gender pay gap and ensuring that there is a balanced representation of different genders within the workforce and across all roles.

We have continued to monitor the employment 'lifecycle' of our staff; from initial recruitment ensuring that we have fair and consistent selection processes; career development opportunities for all job roles; clear and consistent promotion and salary processes; with equitable and flexible working practices.

Other actions the College do to continue to promote fair pay for all and close the gender pay gap include:

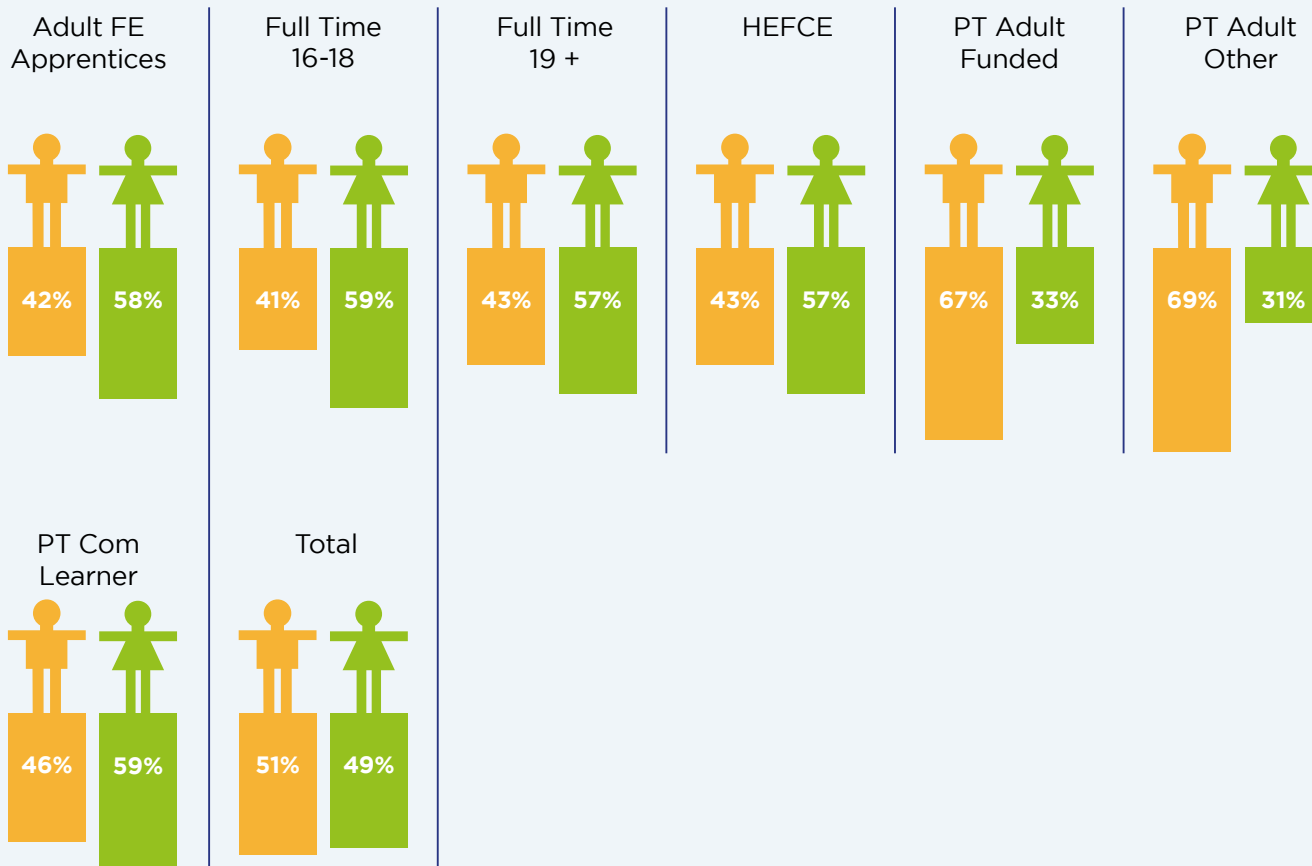
- Work towards removing the gender bias associated with certain roles and contract types.
- Commitment to continuous professional development and fair and equal recruitment processes.
- Better communications with the education sector network channels to understand how other colleges are tackling their gender pay gap challenge.
- Explore the possibility of encouraging more diverse working patterns, in addition to the Agile Working introduced in 2021, this might include compressed hours, permanent working from home and increased flexible working arrangements. This will be more appropriate in certain departments within the College.
- Continued policy review and development.
- Encourage the uptake of Shared Parental Leave.
- Workforce data analysis

Our Students

Students Profile 23/24

Overall Student Cohort position for HoW College students 23/24 (classroom based)

Students by Gender





Students by Ethnicity

Heart of Worcestershire College continues to attract learners from minority ethnic communities, this is reflected in the student cohort profile.

Demographic profile of residents of Worcestershire

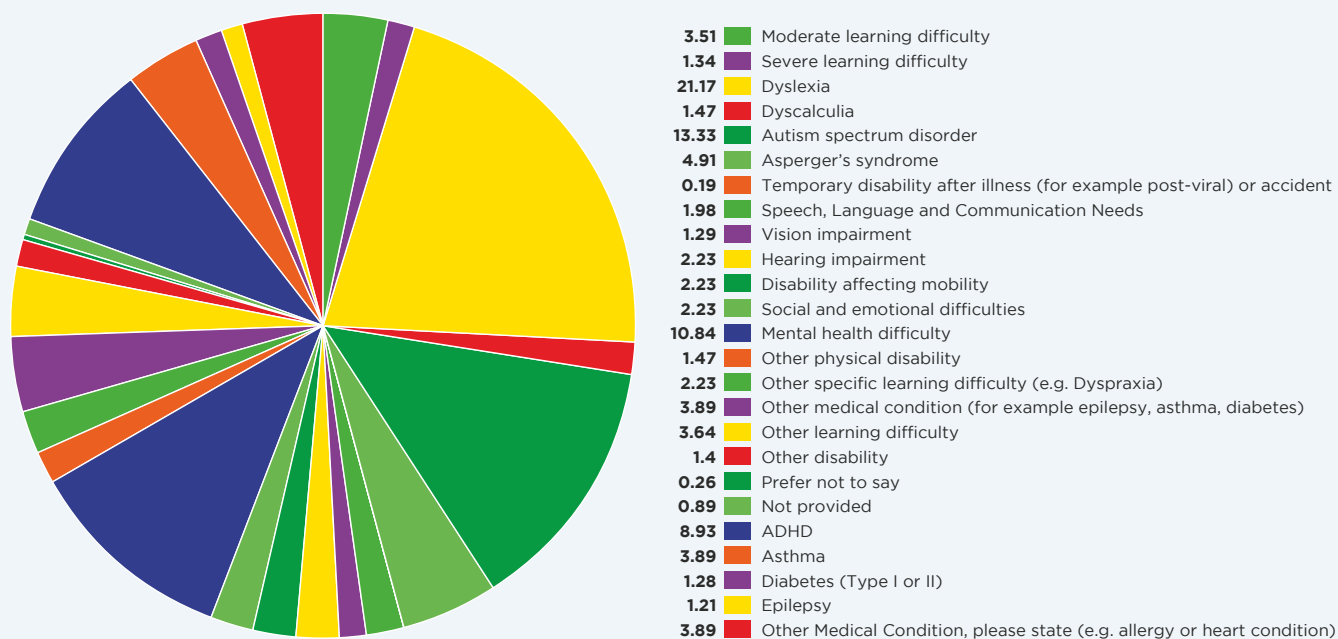
(Worcestershire Demographic Report-Census 2021)

White	93.8%	British	1.9%
Asian	3.1%	Other ethnic group	0.6%
Black	0.7%		

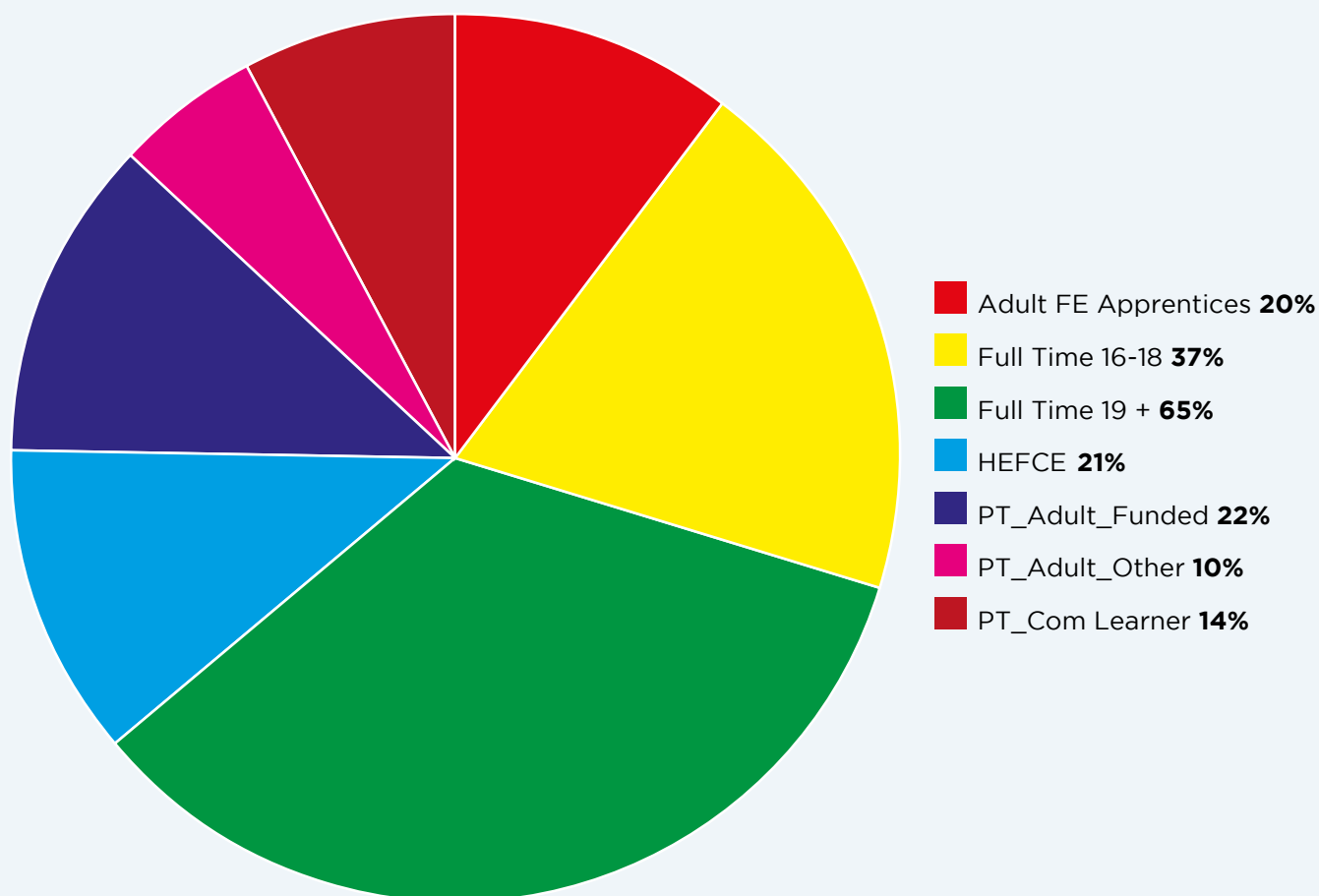
	Asian	Black	Mixed	Not Provided	Other	White
Adult FE PICS	3%	1%	0.13%	0.38%	0%	96%
Full Time 16-18	5%	4%	1%	1%	1%	89%
Full Time 19 +	10%	4%	3%	1%	0.48%	82%
HEFCE	6%	3%	0%	2%	1%	89%
PT Adult Funded	16%	8%	1%	2%	1%	73%
PT Adult Other	7%	4%	1%	2%	0.39%	87%
PT Com Learner	13%	3%	0%	5%	0%	80%
Total	8%	4%	1%	1%	0.47%	86%

Students by disability

25.77% of our overall learners declared having a disability, difficulty or medical condition. (Data for pie chart)



Declared LLDD BY Learner Category



Our Planning

The Heart of Worcestershire College strives to be an outstanding inclusive college where all staff and learners feel valued and respected, having a fair and equal chance to reach their potential.

We aim to respond to the diverse profile of needs expressed by our learners, staff and stakeholders and celebrate the diversity of the College community. We aim to go beyond statutory requirements to ensure our learners, staff and partners have the best experience possible. Through our Equality Action Plan we will work with the College community and beyond to make the College a truly inclusive organisation. We believe that Equality and Diversity is an essential ingredient for overall quality improvement.

The College ethos to Equality and Diversity includes the:

- **Involvement of the various communities of interest** - so that their priorities and concerns can be identified and inform college practice and policy.
- **Data gathering for analysis and monitoring** - to establish what different groups experience in terms of recruitment, retention and success as a student or as a member of staff. Any significant differentials will be further explored and actions agreed accordingly.
- **Raising awareness** - through staff and learners induction, bespoke training and by having thematic weeks to celebrate diversity
- **Action planning** - The College will set equality objectives at least every 4 years to move forward its aim to be an outstanding college. The objectives will be translated into an Equality action plan which will be agreed every year and monitored on a regular basis.
- **Publicise the scheme** - to ensure transparency in our approach and practice regarding Equality and Diversity. This will enable learners, staff and the College's community to be informed of progress and give stakeholders the opportunity to respond.



Equality and Diversity Strategy Group

Heart of Worcestershire College has an established Equality and Diversity Steering Group to lead on the organisation's strategic approach to equality and diversity. Key post holders from across college attend these meetings each term.

This group will:

- Ensures the College meets its responsibilities with regard to its public sector general and specific duties;
- Ensure Equality and Diversity is promoted effectively through teaching and learning;
- Ensures that information regarding Equality and Diversity is communicated effectively to the College community;
- Monitors, review and contributes to the College's Equality and Diversity Objectives and Action Plan;
- Makes recommendations as to how the promotion of the equality duties can be further enhanced and improved through the curriculum and service provision;
- Monitors additional equality and diversity operational meetings to share and develop best practice and ensure whole organisation 'buy in';
- Reviews and revises the College's Equality Policy annually;
- Contributes to the College's annual Equality and Diversity Report, published in January;
- Monitors the progress made against college EDIMs;
- Monitors any complaints pertaining to Equality and Diversity;
- Champions inclusive practice.



Supporting Learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Learners with Special Educational Needs are well supported at Open Days and through the admissions processes. Close working relationships with local specialist and mainstream schools enables learners to explore their options early and helps ensure a successful transition to college. Learners identified with additional learning needs and disabilities receive personalised support that meets their individual needs. Learners can access support by declaring their needs through the Admissions and Enrolment process or at any time during their course. Tutors will also refer learners for support at any time. Support staff provide tailored support to learners, they actively promote independence, support future progression and ensure learners are prepared for adulthood.

Support across College is provided by a range of staff including, Learning Support Assistants. Personal Learning Coaches, Academic Skills Support Mentors, High Needs Coordinators and specialist external agencies.

The High Needs Support Co-ordinators ensure that the College can meet the needs of a student with an EHCP via the consultation process with the Local Authority. They can meet with parents/carers to discuss support requirements and they can also be involved with Year 10 and 11 reviews at school as and when

required. They arrange school visits and help to facilitate the transition from school to college. They are also able to arrange appropriate training for staff as required for specific needs.

An annual review is carried out for each learner with an EHCP, and learners are encouraged to attend and give their views. Paperwork is adapted for learners with more complex communication needs to allow them to express their views independently. A discussion will take place around the needs of a learner, suggesting amendments to the plan if needed, and to look at the progression for the next academic year. We will give parents/carers information regarding options available for the learner once they finish college.

HoW College works closely with Worcestershire County Council to deliver education to a high number of learners classified as requiring high support needs (normally those learners have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) plan in place).

The College had 270 learners with an Education Health Care Plan in 2023-24, with 149 enrolled in discrete SEN provision, 34 in Progressions, and 87 in vocational and technical programmes across the College, studying at Entry Level 3 and Levels 1, 2 and 3.

Specialist Learning Support



The Specialist Learning Support team offer a personalised support package for learners with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The support offered strives to remove barriers to learning and to provide a level playing field by providing effective learning support, access to specialist assistive technology, and by providing learners with study skills to develop and work independently.

The team offers tailored support strategies to meet the needs of the individual during their learner journey. As a result, this encourages learners to reach their full potential, and progress to their next intended destination, including work, further education, higher education, and adulthood.

During 2023-24 the Specialist Learning Support team delivered academic learning support to 87 learners with an EHCP, including 6 apprentices. In addition, 69 received academic support through the department.

A range of assistive technology and resources are used by the Specialist Learning Support team to support learners, such as reader pens, Read & Write specialist software, Microsoft text to Speech and voice dictation software, coloured Cerium overlays, writing pads and reading rulers.



Academic Skills Support Mentors

The Academic Skills Support Mentors provide support to learners across education programmes for young people (EPYP) (excluding SEN and Progressions) who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD). Support is personalized to the individual learner's needs. Examples of the type of support provided are 1:1 meetings to breakdown assignments, demonstrating and providing assistive technology and aids, processing exam access arrangement referrals, supporting with study skills such as note-taking strategies and planning/organisation.

The service aims to remove learning barriers and enable learners with learning difficulties/disabilities to have a level playing field with their peers to achieve. This is part of the vision of the College, "nurturing the brilliance of every student". We also aim to empower learners to access support, building their self-confidence and independence to prepare them for their next steps in education or employment.

Learners who have a support need can refer themselves into the service using the Help button on the student portal, or they can be referred by their teacher or personal tutor.

The primary needs supported are Dyslexia, ADHD, Autism and Mental health difficulties.

The team of six Academic Skills Support Mentors are based in the welcoming, safe and accessible Learning Centres across the College. Each Academic Skills Support Mentor is assigned to a caseload of curriculum areas to ensure that learners and staff have a consistent point of contact. The Academic Skills Support Mentors work closely with the Personal Tutor and teaching staff in their curriculum areas, and English and maths teams to share information on the progress of learners. The team also work closely with the Wellbeing team to ensure support needs of learners are shared and met appropriately. We collaborate with the Specialist Learning Support team to discuss learners' support needs and process Exam Access Arrangement (EAA) referrals, so EAA requests are processed consistently and effectively. 437 exam access arrangement referrals were processed for EPYP learners in 2023/24, of those 343 were approved ensuring that each of those learners was given the opportunity to have a level playing field at point of assessment. Exam Access Arrangements included 25% extra time, readers, rest breaks and smaller rooms.

Higher Education learners

HE Learners

A key part of the HE Engagement Officer's role is to meet the needs of students with a disability. Overall the College has an increasing population of students declaring disability at the point of application.

A student is considered to have a disability or be disabled with the following conditions;

- Long-term physical health condition
- Permanent or long term impaired mobility
- Mental health difficulties
- Specific learning difficulty (SPLD) such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or dyscalculia
- An Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) such as Asperger's
- Hearing or sight impairment

Support can take some or all of the following;

- Meeting the legal requirement to make reasonable adjustments to enable the student to be able to study and access services
- Pastoral and academic support
- Assistance in seeking diagnosis and evidencing of disability
- Supporting curriculum staff by creating and disseminating course profiles
- Assistance in applying for relevant funding including Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)
- Assistance in ordering and using assistive technology
- Assistance in implementing exam access arrangements

Information evenings are held to explain what support is available for students with disabilities, this includes inviting current level 3 students who will be progressing onto HE courses and external applicants who have identified themselves as having a disability through the application process. The HE Engagement Officer invites identified students to an individual meeting to discuss their needs, including what reasonable adjustments they may require and whether they are eligible for DSA funding and explaining the process of applying. Reasonable adjustments can be physical and environmental adjustments such as holding classes on a ground floor when a lift isn't available. Other reasonable adjustments relate to teaching, learning and assessment needs, which can include exam arrangements and providing learning materials prior to class sessions. At this meeting, students are asked to complete a Consent to Share document which enables the HE Engagement Officer to create a course profile to assist curriculum staff in supporting the student effectively.

Academic support from the HE Engagement Officer is available to all L4 – L7 students through the proof-reading service and academic support with assignment writing as required.

The College collects feedback from all our HE student body in a number of different ways across the academic year. This feedback is then used to improve the student experience for all learners, including those with specific needs.

Support for Learners with safeguarding, wellbeing and mental health needs

The Wellbeing Service safeguards and supports the wellbeing and mental health needs of learners, to empower them to build resilience and confidence to make positive decisions to enable them to achieve to the best of their ability. The support is student centric and is individually tailored to meet the learner's needs and can vary from offering low level mental health support to attending multi-agency meetings to collaborate on how to keep a student safe. Vulnerable learners are identified from application and throughout the year, with targeted cohorts, such as Care Experienced, those living independently aged 16-18, young parents or young carers, those on a Child in Need or Child Protection plan, those with a wellbeing or mental health concern with an Educational Health Care Plan, receiving extended monitoring of their retention on the course and achievement. Student support and wellbeing remains a strategic priority across the college and is effective at ensuring that learners at risk or those with personal and social needs are swiftly identified and receive timely intervention. Within the department there is a strong culture of inclusivity with a range of services that are accessible to learners to support personal and social needs. Academic and support staff work collaboratively to swiftly identify those learners who are at risk of not achieving and who would benefit from support and intervention. 1,482 learners accessed wellbeing support. Support for vulnerable learners is effective, with a very large majority being retained in year 88.3% overall.

Poor mental health has been evidenced as a factor in under achievement and therefore in addition to 1:1 support and referrals to external services, the team have created self-help resources to promote positive mental wellbeing and mental fitness for learners experiencing poor mental health, as well as promoting the benefits of mental wellbeing to all learners.

Significant mental health concerns, including suicide attempts and suicide plans remain high. Students are supported by the Wellbeing Team and are referred into appropriate agency support. In addition to this, suicide safety plans are completed with students to ensure appropriate measures are in place for the students to be safe both in College and outside.

Wellbeing and Emotional Support Teams (WEST) service delivered by CAMHS was introduced into the College in January 2024 to support learners aged 16-18. 174 students were referred into Onside and WEST in 2023-24.

The introduction of the Wellbeing and Emotional Support Team (WEST) service for 16-18 from January 2024 has contributed to the 104% increase in referrals made by the College to external partners for mental health support.

Exam support sessions were delivered in multiple locations before and after each GCSE exam, offering a safe place for learners to access support in a calm environment to enable them to reduce their stress levels before attending an exam, giving them the best opportunity to succeed.

Additional measures for 24/25 include the introduction of the Ripple browser extension. This has been implemented on College systems, it is an online interceptive tool designed to ensure more help and support is provided to individuals conducting searches related to self-harm or suicide. A pop-up displays on the device, accompanied with a message of hope. 24/7 helplines and mental health resources are then provided to the individual.

There has been a 9% increase in mental health disclosures from 438 in 22/23 to 478 in 23/24. Emotional wellbeing continues to be the primary cause for concern, accounting for 48% of all cases, a 10% increase from 22/23. Anxiety accounted for 18%, showing a 7% decrease compared to 22/23. Suicidal thoughts showed an increase of 1.5%.

Mental health support remains a key focus of the team. Robust triaging of cases is completed and tailored options of support, both from the team and external partners is offered to the individual. In addition to this, the weekly Calm Zone sessions, Thrive + Campaign weeks and Exam Stress support sessions complement the mental health support offer, by teaching learners positive coping strategies and grounding techniques.

Students are empowered to engage with activities that support them to take responsibility for their own wellbeing and positive mental health. 86.1% of students with disclosed mental health, were retained in year.

There has been a significant 32.75% increase in referrals to agencies, from 174 in 22/23 to 252 in 23/24, with a notable 104.7% increase in referrals for mental health support from 85 22/23 to 174 23/24. This, in part, will be due to having access to additional resources such as the WEST service and continuation of the Act on It programme, being delivered onsite.

Protected Factors

Learners with a Protected Factor indicator are closely monitored by support teams and academic staff. Regular meetings with support teams and CRQ leaders and managers have increased the understanding of barriers to learning with these cohorts.

Attendance and retention are monitored via the EDI strategy group.

Protected Factor	College Overall
Child Looked After	45
Young Carer	18
Young Parent	5
Independent Liver	10
Child In Need	16
Child Protection	8
Care Leaver	29
Total	165

	Care Leaver	Child Looked After	Child in Need	Child Protection	Independent Liver	Mental Health	Safeguarding	Young Carer
Attendance	83%	86%	81%	77%	63%	81%	82%	84%
Retention	86%	86%	71	100%	67%	86%	86%	83%

The Student Experience Team deliver Thrive + campaigns complementing the Thrive tutorial programme.

There has been an 85% increase in participation of comparable Thrive + campaigns from 1,007 in 22/23 to 1,863 in 23/24.

Mental Health Awareness

Sessions delivered on identifying good and poor coping mechanisms for poor mental health.

Healthy Coping Mechanisms	Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms
Volunteering	Isolating yourself from others
Therapy	Drinking alcohol
Exercise	Spending too much money
Writing	Overworking
Drawing	Toxic relationships
Spending time with pets	Too much screen time
Gardening	Smoking
Traveling	Not accepting help
Getting enough sleep	Bottling up your emotions
Spending time with friends and family	Not getting a job

96% of the students would contact a member of staff if they were concerned about their mental health.

Main things learnt from session.

- Always speak out when you feel down
- Exercise is good for mental health
- Healthy and unhealthy coping strategies
- How to contact the Wellbeing team
- Knowing where to go when you need to talk to someone
- To always try to help
- How to look after your mental health

Sexual Harassment

This campaign was designed to ensure students understood appropriate sexual behaviour, challenging sexual harassment, helping others who are experiencing sexual harassment, importance of consent, keeping yourself safe and others, staying safe from spiking, reporting sexual harassment at College, in the workplace or public place and challenging myths.

97% found the session useful. The other 3% stated they knew the information already.

All 275 students articulated that they would report concerns through to Personal Tutors, Whisper anonymous reporting, tell a member of staff, report to an external agency or tell family or friends.

Students reported the main information they have taken away from the session

- How to keep themselves safe
- Safe ways they could help someone who was being harassed
- Sexual harassment/violence is never the victim's fault
- More of an understanding what sexual harassment/violence looks like

Student Ambassadors Subgroups

The EDI ambassadors facilitated drop-in activities in the SUBs with the theme, Celebrating what makes us unique.

Students were encouraged to write down quotes on why it's important to be themselves and the importance of inclusivity.

Students also participated in a word associating activity, describing what each word means to them. A group of students while taking part in the activity mentioned a documentary. It was about a group of autistic, and learning disabled people interviewing the actor Michael Sheen, they quoted "it's the most positive representation of that group of people I have ever seen". They suggested that it would be good for students around the College to see. This has now been played in the SUBs and recommended to learners.

Quote from student, "It is nice to have the option to do something fun about the topic, this is something I would like to see more of going forward next year, as I think more students would get involved".

Wellbeing Ambassadors

Following feedback from students, activities for mental health awareness was focused on coping strategies to alleviate stress due to forthcoming exams. The SUBs were transformed into calming spaces for students to come throughout the week to seek advice, tips and tricks to get through the exam period.

Calm Zone style activities such as scratch pads, colouring, clay modelling and fidget toys were made available to students all week. Calm Zone / therapy dogs attended on Wednesday at 12:00-14:00 as usual.

Exam equipment such as pens, pencils and highlighters were purchased and handed out to students, so they felt confident they had all of the items needed to sit their exams.

Advice posters and leaflets from Colleges West Midlands were displayed which included tips on staying active and living a healthier lifestyle which were available for students to pick up and take away.

Quotes from students:

"Getting free exam equipment has helped give me peace of mind ahead of my exams"

"I'm slowly feeling more prepared for my exams"

"I'm going to focus on getting into a better routine and sleep better this exam period"

Digital Innovation

The Digital Innovation Ambassadors were selected to pilot a project that was funded by Public Health. The College purchased VR headsets following a successful bid. The purpose of the VR headsets is to support emotional regulation. This was seen as a significant subject due to a sharp rise in young people experiencing high levels of anxiety. This project further enhances the support services available to learners and introduce an innovative method of supporting self-regulation, with the intention of developing positive coping strategies. The Ambassadors trialed the headsets and selected the most appropriate apps.

The Student Ambassadors reported using the VR headsets had this response.

- It helps to calm you down
- Makes you feel calm, especially with music in the background
- Makes you feel relaxed and takes you away from stressful situations
- Helps with being a distraction
- Gives students a nice distraction who may suffer with mental health
- It helps process any thoughts you may have had throughout the day
- Time to reflect for yourself
- Wearing the VR headset whilst either speaking to someone or before speaking to someone helps process your thoughts and feelings.

Neurodiversity Ambassadors

Our Student Ambassadors felt it was important to celebrate this year's Autism Acceptance week in April. A Student Ambassadors from the Level 1 IT course in Worcester offered to do an interview with the Student Experience team in the form of a Q&A on why it is important for it to be celebrated.

Q: Why is it important to celebrate autism acceptance week 2024?

A: *"It's important to celebrate because everyone should know what autism is and they should know how it can affect someone day to day. People should be aware because they might have a child or family member in the future that has autism and it would be beneficial if they are educated so that they can help them out. By spreading awareness, it also helps people to realise that even if someone with autism isn't academic, there are other things that they may excel in."*

Celebrating autism acceptance week also helps to spread awareness of the struggles that are sometimes faced by people with autism. People should know that being diagnosed with autism isn't a bad thing and good support is available because people tend to be very understanding."

Q: What challenges does autism bring you in your day-to-day life?

A: *"I can sometimes take things very literally and jokes can take me a little bit longer to understand. It can sometimes be difficult to understand that something wasn't said in a certain way and meant in a completely different way. I might also sometimes over analyse and overthink different scenarios."*

Q: Is there anything specific that you'd like to spread awareness on?

A: *"Autism burnout is something that can affect people with autism. It can make it really difficult to complete tasks that I can usually do really easily such as remembering things and can make me feel really tired. If ever you are in the position to help someone who is affected by this, please listen to them and do your best to help."*

I would also like to raise awareness around the fact that some people never get diagnosed or get diagnosed later on in their life. Their struggles may be even more difficult than those who are diagnosed. For example, from my experience, diagnosis put me in the right environments at the right time which allowed me to thrive."

This article was published in the Student Newsletter.

LGBTQIA+ Ambassadors

Group members supported the Student Experience Team to create displays to celebrate LGBTQIA+ month. Students participated in writing quotes about why it's important for the College to promote and celebrate LGBTQIA+. Student Ambassadors ran a Pop-up stall in Redditch to raise awareness of the significance of the LGBTQIA+ flags.

Quotes from participants

"I have learnt that LGBT community have more than one flag, thought it was just the rainbow one"

"Students presented themselves well, good to see that they are wanting to spread the word on important topics"- Quote from staff who attended.

"Vicky and team were fun and encouraged us to take part and learn facts"

"More events like this around the college would be fun"

"Good to understand the different terms as I think it can be a little confusing at times"

Quotes from Student Ambassadors

"I am surprised how many students interacted with us"

"Nice to see staff members coming over and showing support for us"

"Nice that I am part of the community and students were showing respect towards the pop up"

Youth Social Action Ambassadors (AoC)

7 students were recruited to take part in the project – 6 from NEET courses in Redditch and 1 from L3 Public Services in Worcester. The elected students participated in a mentor day at Dudley College in November 2023. Working alongside Sandwell College, the students took part in team building activities that focused on developing the skills needed to successfully plan and deliver a social action project. The students completed their planning and pitched their idea by means of a presentation to the wider group.

Student feedback following the trip.

'It was really nice to meet all of the other students on the project due to me being the only student from Worcester, I'm looking forward to putting our plan into action!'

'Being a part of the team will hopefully grow my confidence'

'I loved the activities that the leader put on'

'It was a really fantastic day'

'From doing youth social action at school, I'm looking forward to carrying this on at college'

Throughout the year the Youth Social Action Ambassadors have been researching, planning and organising their end project. This will be running a series of health and wellbeing activities with learners from the SEN department. All activities have been approved and adapted to suit the needs of the students in each class.

The Youth Social Action Ambassadors completed their project by running small and interactive activities for students from SEN groups that aimed to boost their mental wellbeing and teach them new skills, involving them in creative activities that they had not taken part in before. For the project, the ambassadors came up with 5 separate types of sessions that were tailored to each SEN group that came to take part. The YSA ambassadors identified a real need for tailoring each session to meet the needs of each SEN group at the college to ensure all could get involved. The YSA ambassadors worked tirelessly to ensure this was carried out and liaised with college staff and conducted their own research on what activities would suit each group. They also looked into external mental health organisations that the college have good existing relationships with and took inspiration on what they recommend and what would work best for groups of students to achieve the goal of supporting good mental wellbeing.

The activities the YSA ambassadors put on for the students were as follows:

Activity 1: Arts and crafts – The aim of this activity was creating rainmakers and encouraging SEN students to be creative and interact with different people and amongst themselves.

The YSA ambassadors sourced all resources from recycled material in order to support theirs and the College's Eco ethos.

Activity 2: Team building / communication games – The aim of this activity was helping the SEN students further build their confidence by interacting with each other in a fun and relaxed environment.

The YSA ambassadors put on a variety of different communication games and teambuilding exercises. These included 'Protect the Egg', building the tallest tower using the resources given, parachute games, ring toss games and more!

Activity 3: Calming and relaxing activities – The YSA ambassadors really liked what our student experience and wellbeing department already do to support the mental wellbeing of it's students during specific times throughout each week via the weekly 'Calm zone' where students can get involved in calming activities and immerse themselves in a relaxing environment. The YSA ambassadors wanted to mimic this and put on these types of sessions aimed exclusively at SEN students.

The activities that the ambassadors chose to put on during these sessions were clay making, colouring in, listening to relaxing music and availability of using lots of different stress / fidget toys.

Throughout the project, the YSA ambassadors often had to adapt to different challenges. One of the challenges that often presented itself was that more students joined each session than they had initially expected which required them to gather more resources, require more space for the different activities and had to support more students at once.

Moving forward there are plans to embed Youth Social Action ambassadors into the Learner Voice Framework. Discussions are being held with CRQ L for Progressions and CRQ L for SEN to mirror the project each year ensuring sustainability of the excellent outcomes of the pilot project.

Staff members who attended the sessions with the SEN students commented that it was nice to see their students have the confidence to get involved within the activities provided. They said with them having the chance to speak with the YSA ambassadors meant that they pushed themselves out their comfort zone which can be difficult to them.

Youth Social Action Ambassadors quotes on the impact of the project.

- *"The impact it has had on me is that I have got to travel to lots of places and work with a variety of diverse people with different skills and expertise, both of which have given me a great amount and great types of experience".*
- *"My confidence and self-esteem has increased by presenting my own skills and expertise in front of unfamiliar people".*
- *"I have learned that when everyone in a team puts all of their confidence, skills and ideas into any project, the more everyone puts in the more product the team gets out".*
- *"It was great to be part of a project where we have helped other students feel less lonely and get them involved in new activities".*
- *"To anyone maybe thinking of becoming an ambassador next year, I would say that if you want to see a reflection of your hard-work and commitment, I would highly recommend it".*

Feedback quotes from the SEN students that attended the sessions put on by the YSA ambassadors can be found below:

- *"It was relaxing and enjoyable" [sic]*
- *"I was shown how to make different things"*
- *"I like doing art"*
- *"I did colouring and I enjoyed it and I found it calming"*
- *"I like making the rain maker and being shown how to make it"*

Staff members that have been a part of helping our YSA ambassadors complete the project have given positive feedback aimed at how well the YSA ambassadors have done and how beneficial it has been for some of their own students who have benefitted from the project. We have included some quotes from staff members below:

- *"The learners enjoyed the session and it was nice to have them be able to take something home from the session".*
- *"By taking part in the session, it allowed the learners to interact with new people".*



Careers

Due to a comprehensive and inclusive offer, all students are able to access individualised 1:1 guidance sessions with qualified Careers Advisors, with a large majority (87%) of learners stating the College has helped them to plan their next steps and prepare them well for a future career. (Satisfaction survey).

The service is responsive to students needs and offers a variety of support methods, including telephone and Teams appointments as well as short interactions and full guidance sessions. To further complement the service, students can access personal statement checking, support with CVs and opportunities to engage with employers and guest speakers during National Careers Week.

IAG is delivered by a range of personnel across the college and referral is used very well to ensure needs are understood and specific expertise is employed in order for students to move forward both academically and personally, as confirmed in the Matrix Standard reaccreditation report.

As a result of strong promotion and targeted interventions, through induction, THRIVE, careers drop ins, National Careers Week, Potential Pathways, participation in THRIVE 1:1 sessions for short interactions and newsletters, student participation in specialist guidance sessions has increased from 523 to 842, resulting in a 61% increase from 22-23.

There is a clear focus to support learners who have a protected factor, signifying a recognised vulnerability or potential barrier to achievement. 30.8% of learners with a protected factor received one-to-one career guidance session.



THRIVE Tutorial Programme

THRIVE resources and tutorial sessions add value to the 16-19 full time study programme and address learner's personal development needs through introducing and encouraging learners to discuss themes that enhance their role as positive citizens in the College, their local communities, and wider society. A standardised set of quality resources are provided for personal tutors to use in their group tutorial sessions to stimulate discussion and debate. A range of independent activities are provided on Moodle for learners to inform, reflect, revisit, and check their understanding on topics.

Personal tutors can and are encouraged to adapt resources to contextualise to their vocational or technical area and the learning needs of their group, to enhance learners understanding of how the topic's principles apply to them in their industry and in the wider context of societal responsibility. CPD opportunities for Personal Tutors are offered throughout the year to maintain accurate delivery and information.

The programme supports the strategic priorities of the College to develop 21st century skills and prepares learners for employment, supports personal development and mental wellbeing, promotes equality, and celebrates diversity and explores issues of social exclusion.

For the 23/24 academic year, 75% of 747 learners agreed that *"the workload in Thrive is consistent across weeks."* Additionally, 81% of learners found that each week provided a clear and accessible layout with instructions for their independent 121 sessions. Upon reflection at the end of the year, 43% reported a more positive experience with Thrive compared to the beginning. This improvement was more pronounced among L3Y2 learners, who had previously expressed concerns during learner voice conferences about repetitive topics in past years. These results support the goal of a more differentiated approach for the 23/24 programme.

Learners reported that they enjoyed various topics throughout the year, but areas which stood out were Mental Health, Fake News, and an Introduction to Basic First Aid.

Learner quotes *'Professional etiquette was interesting to learn about since I didn't really know anything about that prior to this', 'I enjoyed learning about the world around us.'* and *'I enjoyed learning about mental health because where I have struggled with it before it was nice to be able to understand how to overcome it'.*

24/25

Thrive and other college programmes, like Elements, have now been grouped together under a new Personal Development Framework for the 24/25 academic year. This was following feedback from our recent OFSTED and FE Commissioner visits. Thrive is now to be delivered in all areas of the college including EPYP, Adults, Apprenticeships and Access to HE. The framework's purpose is to prepare students for life in modern Britain by developing and extending their knowledge and skills beyond the purely academic, technical, or vocational. (Life, Work and Career Ready), extending and complimenting learning. The framework includes the 5 C's which focus on employability skills like Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, Collaboration and Corporate Behaviours and this is being embedded through curriculum rationales and planning across the college.

Tutorial content for 24/25 has been planned in collaboration with Personal Tutors and CRQ leaders in a structured schedule outlining which topics will be covered in core weeks, with further weeks being flexible based on several topics, from staff and student feedback. Core topics are aligned to college campaign weeks and an early focus on important topics such as Prevent, Safeguarding and British Values. A consolidation week takes place before each half term for Personal Tutors to explore a topic in more depth and recall topics during the previous weeks.

The THRIVE programme is responsive and flexible to cross-college themes and external events and can be adapted to accommodate topics. For example, a session was introduced early in the academic year of 23-24 around the rise of knife crime across the region. Resources were curated by internal and external specialists that were able to highlight the risks in certain areas and delivered to students, so they had current information about these risks. Students fed back that they were unaware of this rise and now felt informed on how to avoid and protect themselves.

Corridor Conversations and pulse surveys are being completed in 24/25 to gauge and check a student's understanding of the topics covered within Thrive. This will help with the clarification and recall of important information to help development. This will also compliment and support the quality and development of subjects across Thrive allowing the team to continue contextualise and differentiate the resources appropriately.

In 23-24, there has been excellent practice within areas such as Hair and Beauty, Digital Media, IT and Sport where Personal Tutors have contextualised content to relate to the subjects covered in Thrive. For example, in Sport and Hair and Beauty, Safeguarding was tailored to sport professionals and salons so students could understand how this relates to them and what they would need to be aware of in industry.

All students took part in a new cross college Potential Pathways campaign that covered topics such as career planning, self-reflection, employability skill reflection, progression interviews and face to face sessions from local employers, this has also been planned for 24-25 and will link to nationwide campaigns such as national careers week.

Of the 1052 learners surveyed in Potential Pathways in 23-24, 36% of learners said it was highly useful to have this focus. They were given a 'good amount of information' and 'choices about my next steps', and while some may not have a definitive answer, 'At this current moment, I am undecided as to what I am doing for next steps, However, I am being given support as to what I am considering'.



Learning Centres

Learning Centres Resources are provided in both print and electronic format and elements of the collection are suitable for all cohorts in College, including FE 16-19, adults, apprenticeships, SEN and high needs learners, and HE and Professional. The physical spaces are positive, safe, welcoming and inclusive learning environments and are a combination of IT and traditional study spaces in modern facilities, including a TalkPod, breakout areas for discussions, high tables, and comfortable seating. We support and encourage learners to be confident in developing their independent study skills to transition effectively between levels of study or progress to university or employment. The team are the first port of call for any digital skills support and assist learners with accessing College systems and supporting their use of software and developing their digital skills. The team supports, guides and monitors learners during blended learning and online activities including Elements sessions. We effectively collaborate with the Digital Learning Advisors and IT services to retain current awareness of digital skills including tools related to accessibility. The team set high expectations of behaviour and responsibility for learners. We effectively collaborate with other support services to promote College wide themes via visual and digital displays and relevant resources during campaign weeks and signpost learners to financial support services, Specialist Learning Support, Academic Skills Support Mentors and the Wellbeing team as needed and in doing so support the College strategic aims to encourage learners to improve their personal development and mental wellbeing.

Reading Hub

Within the Reading Hubs across Redditch, Bromsgrove, and Worcester, new collections of E&D books are purchased annually. For the academic year 2023-2024, the collection of titles purchased feature titles which both support and celebrate diversity. Examples of titles purchased include:

- **Heartstopper series volumes 1-5** - Boy meets boy. Boys become friends. Boys fall in love. The bestselling LGBTQ+ graphic novel about life, love, and everything that happens in between.
- **Wonder** - Story about Auggie, who was born with a terrible facial abnormality, trying to fit in and be accepted by his classmates.
- **Four Eids and a Funeral** - Feel good YA romance that tackles some of the difficulties Muslim youths may go through. It also incorporates issues like grief and trauma as well as divisions within the Muslim community.
- **Finding Phoebe** - Story about Phoebe who is autistic and prefers to stay in her comfort zone but ends up having to deal with what becomes an ever-changing daily life, when her best friend gets a secret boyfriend and Phoebe reluctantly agrees to cover for her.
- **The Autistic Teen's Avoidant Eating Book** - This guide will help you recognise the signs of avoidant eating, cope with food related anxieties and manage sensory overload, as well as the particular social stresses of communal eating.
- **Wired Differently** - This collection of illustrated portraits celebrates the lives of influential neurodivergent figures who have achieved amazing things in recent times.
- **Different, Not Less** - A neurodivergent's guide to embracing your true self and practical advice for living with meltdowns and how to find supportive communities.

For mainstream curriculum, new titles were purchased including **GCSE Maths for Neurodivergent Learners**. This is a comprehensive book for every neurodivergent learner working towards GCSE Maths, providing strategies and tips for overcoming the challenges a neurodiverse learner faces in the acquisition of Maths.

The Learning Centre Promotions Team have had regular meetings over the year and the following topics have had special promotion:

- **Quick Reads** - A collection of short, engaging fiction books by bestselling authors to encourage people who find reading difficult to pick up a book and enjoy reading. Suitable for a range of reading levels.
- **Book Swap** - an ongoing inclusive initiative, available to all levels of readers; promoting to swap books, demonstrating that reading is for everyone and does not have to be expensive.



Collections of the latest and older Quick Read books and the Book Swap initiative have been promoted in the student newsletter as well as visual and digital displays in the Learning Centre. The book swap has also been promoted to HE and Professional staff and students.

Monthly book reviews are also produced covering a range of texts including dyslexic friendly titles, quick reads, and longer fiction and non-fiction works. These are promoted on digital and physical displays with meanings of some of the key words from the text. They are supported with themed bookmarks for students to take away which have quotes from the text and a QR code with the location information of the item should students wish to borrow the books.

ESOL

The Reading Hubs also provide a full collection of Graded reader titles which are enjoyable reading material for all learners of English.

At the start of the academic year, 11 presentations were delivered to ESOL classes at Redditch and 4 in Worcester on library services and promoting graded readers. This has once again resulted in a successful uptake in reading by ESOL students. This year, the existing collection of ESOL books has also been extended with 20 new titles.

SEN

The Learning Centre at Redditch have a book suggestions box for the SEN learners who visit regularly during the week in the Learning Centre. Based on the requests, Jujutsu Kaisen Manga series was purchased, and the books have proved to be very popular. This year, the Learning Centre at Redditch were very proud to award a SEN student with the Learning Centre Endeavour Award for Digital and Independent Learning award for being the top fiction reader this academic year.



The Learning Centre team also ran a Snowman competition where students had to find body parts, hidden in the Learning Centre, to build a snowman and an Easter Egg hunt specifically for SEN students was held in Redditch. Both were visual activities encouraging the students to explore their book collection and find all the snowman body parts and as many cardboard eggs hidden within the books in a limited time frame. Four classes participated. The students were then asked to count their eggs embedding numeracy into the activity with a prize awarded to the highest number collected.

In Worcester in addition to the Snowman competition, Easter craft activities were held for 4 classes of SEN students. Students were offered a range of activities from colouring to origami involving a selection of materials for sensory stimulation.

Visual Space:

The Learning Centre staff also continue to work closely with different departments in the college and using the visual space to promote E&D topics and events, all harmonised with the College's calendar of events. Displays featured digital displays, book displays and staff and student newsletter promotions. Some examples of displays this year were:

- Dyslexia Awareness week – October 2023
- Antibullying week – November 2024
- International Women's Day – March 2024
- Mental Health Awareness week - May 2024

A Foodbank collection promotion was also run in the Learning Centres before Christmas. Donation boxes were created themed with the items needed. Staff and students were encouraged to donate with all items collected being donated to the local Foodbank at the start of the new year.



Financial Support

Effective financial support packages are in place to support learners and the College effectively manages its free college meal programme. 89.2% of learners who received financial support were retained for 23-24. The retention rate for learners who received the 16-19 vulnerable bursary was 87.9%.

89% of learners receiving government funded free school meals were retained which is slightly higher than the overall retention for those receiving 16-19 bursary fund (87.9%). 431 learners qualified for support from the government funded Free School Meals which is a slight increase than the previous year (392).

During 23-24 the College supported 519 learners with payments towards meal costs during the holidays. Learners received £15 per week payment during holidays. This was part funded by Worcester City Council, where Edenred vouchers were provided.



Student Feedback

Of the 1,598 learners who completed the Arrivals Survey 2023;

- | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|--------------|---|--------------|--|
| 95.4% | feel they know where to go for support. | 96.8% | feel their learning environment makes them feel welcome and safe. | 96.7% | feel they are treated with respect in College. |
| 99.1% | confirmed they know how to keep themselves safe online. | | | | |

Marketing Campaigns

The Marketing team have continued to assist in the creation, promotion, organisation and distribution of EDI content to internal and external members of the HoW College community; producing content (including the production of graphics, distribution of external opportunities and social media campaigns) for a variety of different celebration/information days and events to help improve awareness for important EDI dates on the calendar.

EDI dates/events included: Holocaust Memorial Day, LGBT+ History Month, National Apprenticeships Week, International Women's Day (Fearless Females campaign), International Nurses Day, International Day of the Midwife, Autism Awareness Month, World Fair Trade Day, International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, Mental Health Awareness Week, World Refugee Day, International Women in Engineering Day, the Black History Month, International Men's Day (Magnificent Males campaign) and many more.

For 22/23 the team introduced a new 'Brilliant Non-Binary' campaign dedicating a week around International Non-Binary People's Day to raising awareness and celebrating the non-binary community.

Topics included the importance of Non-Binary Awareness, misgendering and appropriate responses and further education around what it means to be non-binary. The campaign was well received and praised by stakeholders and other colleges across social platforms.

For each campaign the team researched each subject in depth, pooling useful digital resources, a brief history into each area and relevant statistics/figures of interest. In addition, the team also worked with student and staff within the HoW College community to share their stories and insights into EDI. These were shared across our social channels in various week-long and month-long campaigns encouraging our stakeholders to actively educate themselves on these important EDI topics.

To enhance our EDI marketing further, the team also created a specific EDI section within the main college website to share resources and further information for each specific EDI campaign which can be accessed here: [Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity | Heart of Worcestershire College \(howcollege.ac.uk\)](https://www.howcollege.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusivity) The College has previously received a Highly Commended Award at the FE First Awards for their EDI communications campaigns.

Update on developments for 2023-24

LGBTQIA+

- Awareness sessions delivered on staff development day.
- Newsletter resources cascaded to staff.

Neurodiversity

- Awareness sessions delivered to support staff.
- Newsletter resources cascaded to staff.

Suicide Prevention

Orange button scheme, and suicide prevention training promoted to staff.

Staff mental wellbeing

- Employer Assistance Programme (EAP) Regularly promoted to staff in addition to regular newsletters featuring mental health and wellbeing.

Mental Health Support for Students

- Increase in mental health support access for students by means of WEST service to complement existing wellbeing support and Thrive + activities.

Social Action

- Youth Social Action project delivered by Progressions students to SEN students.

Cost of Living Crisis

- To support students with cost of living crisis, the Eco group organised Clothes Swaps on each campus, this also aligned with College's environmental and sustainability ethos of reduce, recycle, reuse.
- 489 learners eligible for free college meals and received £15 per week towards food during the holidays.
- 930 awards 16-19 financial bursary and travel scheme and 180 adults received funding support.

Glossary of Acronyms

ADHD	ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	FT	Full Time
AoC	Association of Colleges	HE	Higher Education
AMHS	Adult Mental Health Services	HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	HR	Human Resources
CAMHS	Child and Adolescence Mental Health Services	L4	Level 4
CE	Care Experienced	LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Questioning (or queer), intersex and asexual (or allies)
CLA	Child Looked After	LI	Living Independently
CPD	Continued Professional Development	LLDD	Learner with Learning Difficulty or Disability
DSA	Disabled Students' Allowance	PT	Part Time
EAA	Exam Access Arrangements	R/B	Redditch/Bromsgrove
EAP	Employee Assistance Programme	RSVP	Rape and Sexual Violence Project
EDI	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion	SEN	Special Educational Needs
EHCP	Education Health Care Plan	SPLD	Specific Learning Difficulty
GPs	General Practitioners	WEST	Wellbeing and Emotional Support Teams
EDIM	Equality and Diversity Impact Measures	W/M	Worcester/Malvern
FE	Further Education	YSS	Youth Support Service