

## Access and Inclusion Strategy

February 2017

### Strategy Statement

Following the Scottish Funding Council's full review of Extended Learning Support (ELS), the funds allocated for ELS have been renamed Access and Inclusion Funds. These funds have been allocated to all colleges, including West College Scotland, for the purpose of enhancing our inclusive practices and meeting the needs of our students. The SFC expectation is that West College Scotland uses our allocated funds to deliver a parity of intake and outcome for our students in order that all students have an equal chance of successfully completing their programme of learning.

### Equality Statement

The College is committed to providing equal opportunities to ensure its students, staff, customers and visitors are treated equally regardless of gender reassignment, race, religion or belief; disability; age; marriage and civil partnerships; pregnancy and maternity; sexual orientation; sex.

Please note this document is available in other formats, to request another format please email [Charlene.Clark@wcs.ac.uk](mailto:Charlene.Clark@wcs.ac.uk)

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## **Our Access and Inclusion Contextual Statement**

Following the Scottish Funding Council's full review of Extended Learning Support (ELS), the funds allocated for ELS have been renamed Access and Inclusion Funds. These funds have been allocated to all colleges, including West College Scotland, for the purpose of enhancing our inclusive practices and meeting the needs of our students. The SFC expectation is that West College Scotland uses our allocated funds to deliver a parity of intake and outcome for our students in order that all students have an equal chance of successfully completing their programme of learning.

For this reason, the SFC's guidance on this funding should be read in conjunction with the West College Scotland's legal responsibilities as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. These Access and Inclusion funds are intended to assist West College Scotland in supporting inclusive practices in areas such as:

- teaching
- ICT and
- the welfare of students

This applies to all students in the College across all levels but with particular attention to the progression of students on introductory or access level provision i.e. up to SCQF Level 4.

These funds are intended to ensure successful student achievement, completion, progression, destination as well as contributing to a positive engaging student experience whilst at college.

### **1. *Our Access and Inclusion Services***

This strategy defines the inclusive service we provide and how we monitor its effectiveness and impact. It outlines the inclusive service we provide for our students and sets out our ambitions in relation to our student intake, successful completions and post course destinations. Where possible, these ambitions also include an ambition in relation to improvement in practices and achievement.

Our Access and Inclusion Strategy demonstrates our commitment to creating an inclusive curriculum which recognises the needs of all individuals studying at our College. Where appropriate we embed our inclusive practices across all aspects of college life. The anticipated outcome of our Access and Inclusion Strategy is the creation of confident and assured 'independent learners'.

"How can you be a:

- Successful learner – if you can't read books and learning materials?

- Confident individual – if you depend on others to read to you, write for you or talk for you?
- Responsible citizen – if you don't have access to information?
- An effective contributor – if you can't speak, write or communicate"

Paul Nisbett – CALL

*Implication: West College Scotland aims to enable and empower all students in the above abilities and competencies to ensure they have skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life. This inclusive approach will enable all students to become 'independent learners'.*

### What is 'Access and Inclusion' at West College Scotland?

'Access and Inclusion' at West College Scotland encompasses the following:

– the list is not exhaustive – see fig (i):

- Enabling Services (*formerly Extended Learning Support*)
- Corporate Parenting
- Care Experienced
- Deprived Communities
- Essential Skills
- Safeguarding
- Young Carers/parent carers
- Counselling
- Young Offenders
- Counselling Service Users
- Communities/Outreach

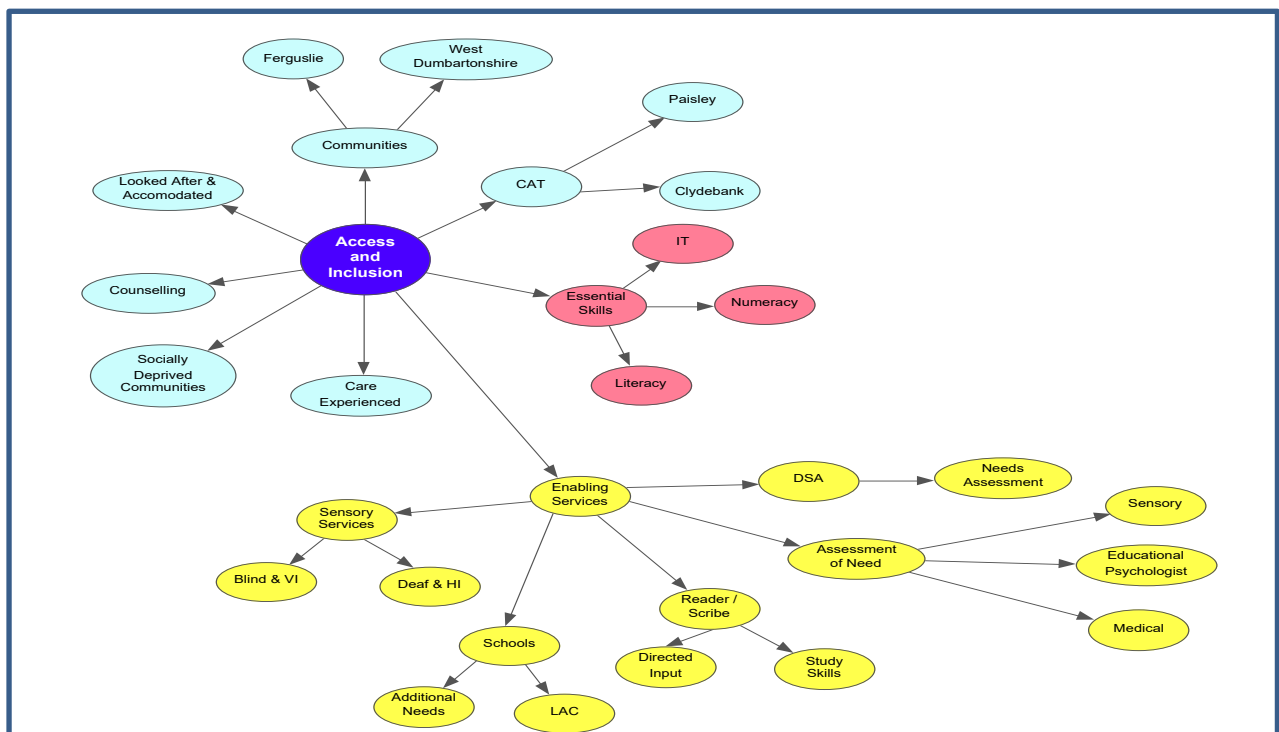


Fig (i)

Department of Enabling Services:

Given the identified, specific, priority focus on ensuring students are supported and positively progress within the College, the ELS Department at West College Scotland has been restructured in order to provide a more effective and responsive service for students to respond to the Government Agenda and SFC requirements. The renamed department, Enabling Services, takes on board the Scottish Funding Council's request to support students with a broad range of needs "from chaotic backgrounds to severe medically diagnosed conditions" (Fiona Burns, SFC). Each member of the team has a remit which contributes to the overall success of the student experience and which contributes to the wide requirements of the new funding model.

**Implication:** *The creation of this structure, and associated business partner model with the Faculties they serve, aims to immerse the team with mainstream curriculum staff and vice versa. This close partnership working aims to ensure that interventions are carried out proactively and in advance of escalation. The presence of an Enabling Services Co-ordinator on each campus will ensure that there is a promoted post presence on all campuses in order to respond to any particular day-to-day issue as they arise and provide a consistency of service across the College.*

## **2. Our Local Authority and Government reporting**

### **What is the impact of the funding model for West College Scotland?**

For Enabling Services at West College Scotland, the impact of the new SFC model for funding, means that:

- We will no longer use an ELS flag in FES to identify individual students in our student records system

**implication:** *the Enabling Services Department will work closely with MIS to capture, track and monitor the levels of enabling services activity within the department whilst liaising closely with curriculum and other services teams within the College.*

- We will collectively work to improve our data collection in order to be able to assess the *impact* that this approach specifically has on our priority access groups at a regional and national level

**implication:** *the Enabling Services Team will work closely with MIS and curriculum teams to analysis the positive impact of Enabling Services' interventions, support, referrals and guidance in realising student potential and enabling progress in learning*

- We will retain Student Personal Learning Support Plans (PLSPs) when it is in the best interest of the student although they are no longer required for financial audit

**implication:** *the Enabling Services Team will work closely with curriculum teams to ensure that PLSPs log all activity and progress diligently and thoroughly to track the progress of all interventions and support provided by all teams.*

- We will use Learning Plans for all students as evidence to support the claim and as good practice. For students whose needs cannot be met through our inclusive approaches alone, we will complete a PLSP as per the SFC expectations.

**implication:** *rigorous guidance Learning Plans will ensure that progress reports for all students are held in a consistent manner to track the learner journey of our students.*

- The SFC has undertaken to improve, significantly, the recording of our priority access groups by providing additional data flags such as improving the flags available to record disability, care experience, profound and complex needs and carers.

The SFC, through our Outcome Agreement Manager, will work closely with West College Scotland to provide information on our priority access groups for comparison with a Scottish level.

**implication:** *the Enabling Services Team will analyse the data and report internally and externally on the findings and any necessary changes or improvements which are highlighted as a result. We will ensure a close working relationship on this via our Outcome Agreement Manager.*

- We will monitor the intake and outcome ambitions we have set ourselves for our priority access groups. When considering this, representation of the priority access groups at a regional, subject and Scottish level will be taken into account.

**Implication:** *all staff involved in Access and Inclusion at West College Scotland will contribute to monitoring our performance.*

- We will track and monitor our intake working in strong partnerships with our local authorities and external agencies with designated points of contact for care experienced students and other vulnerable groups.

**Implication:** *Pre-entry engagement with care teams and their young clients to aid the transition to college. The outcomes for care experienced students will be monitored and analysed as with other groups with a protected characteristic.*

- We will track and monitor our successful completions and destinations

**Implication:** *The Access and Inclusion department at West College Scotland will track, monitor, support and evidence the successful completion and destination statistics of the following groups in particular:*

- *those students who reside in the 10% most deprived postcode areas (Measure 4b).*
- *those students who have declared a disability including by type of disability when possible*
- *those students with dyslexia, deaf or hard of hearing, visual impairments, autistic spectrum disorder and mental health conditions*
- *those students who have declared an additional educational need including literacy and numeracy*
- *those students who have declared a care experience background.<sup>1</sup>*
- *those students who are young carers or have significant caring responsibilities.<sup>2</sup>*
- *those students who are supported through bespoke provision*
  - *(Price Group 5) at the College.*
  - *Please note this strategy replaces Measure 7 in the Outcome Agreement Guidance and the corresponding guidance.*
- *or a combination of the above*
- *or any other identified groups the SFC are supporting who are not covered by the above such as travellers or juvenile offenders, veterans or special interest groups.*

### **WCS Mental Health Strategy**

We aim to create an inclusive learning environment which is conducive to student engagement and making connections that will positively influence student mental health and well being. Our goal is to ensure the provision of adequate, effective and interconnected mental health services which employ “best practice” knowledge in the support of students who are experiencing mental health issues and to maintain responsive processes for individual students at risk.

**Implication:** *We will engage our staff and partners in a process of valuing and initiating actions which promote mental health and well being. We will support students who are experiencing mental health issues, connect them to college support services and signpost external specialist agencies.*

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<sup>1</sup> Care experience is the term used to define people considered under The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. This Act outlines statutory guidance in relation to Corporate Parenting. It defines corporate parenting as: "An organisation's performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted." (Scottish Government, 2015)

<sup>2</sup>The Carers Trust defines a carer as follows: A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.

### **3. Our Partnership Approach**

#### **Who will engage with our WCS Access and Inclusion strategy?**

- all our staff across all Directorates and Faculties at West College Scotland
- our students and our Student Association at West College Scotland
- our regional and community partners
- our Regional Strategic Board in the areas we serve

***Implication:** We will continue to meet the support needs by ensuring staff and students are fully aware of the support on offer, the process of referral and we will expand our reporting in relation to undiagnosed additional needs within the teams to build a profile of requirements for our College.*

### **4. Our Commitment to CPD**

The College fully supports Continuing Professional Development providing all staff the opportunity to update their professional skills, knowledge and understanding in order to support every student within the College and assist in the future career progression for all. Training and support is provided to ensure that all staff are comfortable, confident and competent to meet the educational needs of all students.

***Implication:** the Enabling Services team will continue to work with our Continuing Professional Development team and Marketing to:*

- *conduct raising awareness campaigns of what we can offer; offer advice and guidance on how to spot if and when referrals are necessary; offer specific strategies to staff to support student learning; promote the Enabling Services Lecturer workshops in embracing the benefits of assistive technologies*
- *enhance our own professional development in relation to the latest specialist knowledge, skills and approaches to ensure full student inclusive support in learning; cascade information within the teams; stay abreast of new and existing government initiatives to ensure we connect to wider requirements including Developing the Young Workforce.*

### **5. Our Investment in ICT Organisation**

At West College Scotland, we recognise the key role that Information Technology has in underpinning the development, improvement and success of our College and all its users.



**Implication:** *Our investment in ICT will continue to support an inclusive approach for students. There will continue to be investment in technological advances for the benefit of the students. We will continue to upskill the workforce in the use of these existing and emerging technologies. A specific driver at West College Scotland is the further development of the Digital Literacy agenda. This includes the creation of a baseline for staff skills and student skills in digital and assistive technologies to ensure smooth processes in learning and support for learning.*

## **6. Our Bespoke One-to-One Support**

The overriding approach to Access and Inclusion at West College Scotland is to ensure that its inclusive practices, which support all learners, are embedded throughout the curriculum with specialist staff provide tuition in the use of assistive technology.

**Implication:** *Our processes for providing bespoke individualised support for students including our use of PLSPs will continue to be enhanced and customised to the individual's requirements. We will enhance our tracking of their progression and destinations.*

## **7. Our Student Association Engagement**

This strategy will impact various dimensions of all students' development within West College Scotland. We believe that the engagement of the West College Scotland Student Association is crucial in driving the approach forward, enabling all students to be fully aware of the opportunities for support available while studying at College, seeking student views and feedback on what is working well and where we need to improve the service, seeking student views on further enhancement and development of the area to best support students.

**Implication:** *Communication and close partnership working with the Student Association Executive team is key to delivering a productive and effective service to support the students and to to achieve what our joint strategy is setting out to deliver. The role of the Student Representative Council will be key and their group meetings important as a vehicle for knowledge exchange and dissemination of information across the College to the wider student body.*

## Equality Impact Assessment

**Name of policy/procedure/decision:**

Access and Inclusion Strategy

**Responsible Person:** Angela Pignatelli

**Date:** 6 December 2016

**1. What information is readily available to measure the effect this policy/procedure/decision has on people who share protected characteristics? What data is not available or not reliable?**

Information on the protected characteristics of students is collected at application and enrolment. There is a range of reliability depending on category – for example, there is a reluctance for students to disclose information which is perceived as being sensitive, such as sexual orientation. There is a lack of external and internal data on care experienced students, but it is noted that this Strategy plans to address this gap.

**2. What does this information indicate about positive, neutral and negative impacts on people who share protected characteristics? Please detail below.**

Protected Characteristic	Description of Impact
Age	Younger people are more likely to experience mental health issues and older people. It is also noted that health conditions can increase with age. This Strategy takes a person centred approach which should have a positive impact on all age groups.
Disability	This Strategy has been designed to have a particular positive impact on students with disability. It aims to ensure that needs are met on an individual basis, and that effective processes are in place to support students with a disability. It should also result in increased awareness of good practice in supporting students.
Sex	It is not anticipated that there will be any differential impact on the grounds of sex as this Strategy should promote access and inclusion for all students.
Gender Re-assignment	This Strategy should assist the College in tackling barriers for transgender students. The Scottish Transgender Alliance have reported that trans people experience high levels of depression, anxiety and self-harm, and

	the promotion of initiatives to increase well-being within this Strategy should have a positive impact.
Sexual Orientation	It is not anticipated that there will be any differential impact on the grounds of sexual orientation as this Strategy should promote access and inclusion for all students.
Race	A report from the Royal College of Psychiatrists ( <a href="#">Minority Ethnic Communities and Specialist Learning Disability Services</a> , 2011) points to a number of barriers that exist for these communities in the use of mental health and learning disability services. This Strategy should assist the college in understanding such barriers and in improving access.
Religion or belief	It is not anticipated that there will be any differential impact on the grounds of religion or belief as this Strategy should promote access and inclusion for all students.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Pregnancy and maternity can cause health problems for people with existing medical conditions, and it is anticipated that this Strategy should assist the College in supporting pregnant students or students who have returned from maternity leave.

**3. What arrangements could be implemented to reduce or mitigate any potential adverse or negative impacts identified above?**

No adverse impacts have been identified above. It is noted that there can be barriers for students in seeking support or in providing information about their condition a personal circumstances, and it is anticipated that the Strategy itself should assist the College in tackling these barriers.

**4. Has there been consultation/is consultation planned with stakeholders/ learners/ staff who will be affected by this policy/project/decision?**

A draft of this Strategy will be discussed with the Students Association and the Board of Management.

**5. How will the policy/project/decision be monitored and evaluated?**

We will monitor the intake and outcome ambitions we have set ourselves for our priority access groups. When considering this, representation of the priority access groups at a regional, subject and Scottish level will be taken into account.

**Appendix**

**WCS Case studies illustrating current student detail and positive impacts**

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*Student from a local secondary school who is affected by Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Hydrocephalous who then became blind due to a blockage in her 'shunt' damaging her retina. As part of the transition into College members of the Enabling Services (ELS) team met with representatives of the School, Social Work Service (personal care and transport issues) Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired People, Visibility, etc. Information was freely exchanged on the support strategies and equipment she had previously used when at school and at home. Specialist kit that the student had previously found beneficial to her learning was also agreed to be loaned to the College until such time that either the College or the DSA could purchase it for her to use in class and at home with her studies.*

*Impact: she was able to continue her learning aspirations smoothly and securely when she had thought they may come to an end nad life opportunities may have been restricted.*

*A dyslexic learner enrolled on an HNC Sports course. He initially 'demanded' a Scribe be in attendance at all his classes although not to sit in his proximity – didn't want his peers to know he was receiving additional assistance. Throughout his Schooling and previous courses he was provided with a PA / Note taker at all times. This support was initially provided by Enabling Services with the caveat being that it would be reviewed once he had settled into College. It was the opinion of ES team that this would not develop the student as an 'Independent Learner' who could function in the workplace? Technology was introduced in the form of a Dictaphone to record notes in class and specialist 'study skills' for three hours a week out with class time. A Reader / a Scribe was provided for all assessments as this was his preferred way of working in that situation. After a few weeks this was reviewed and the learner commented on how more 'confident and independent' he had become. As this was an adjustment that the College could reasonably provide, there was no need for an application to SAAS-DSA.*

*Impact: learner taking control of their learning, their life chances and confidence in own ability and capacity*

*After passing the College on a bus each day, one student thought to herself "wish I was clever enough to go to college". After finally plucking up the courage to enter the college, Student Services contacted Enabling Services and asked if they were available to speak to her. After an initial interview where possible support was discussed, she applied for an Access to Social Care course. Initial screening tests conducted indicated a specific learning difficulty and this was thereafter confirmed by an Educational Psychologist commissioned by the College. The student reported that it was a relief to finally know why she had difficulties with aspects of learning. Support in the form of 1:1 tuition, access to specialist software (text-to-speech), proofreading of report & essays prior to submission., extra time for assessments was provided. She achieved this course and then articulated onto the HNC Social Care course where she applied for support from the Disabled Students Allowance. At this point she applied to University and was supported in her application by ES staff who attended the course and support interviews with her. After graduating with a BA in Social Care, she gained employment as a Social Worker with the local council.*

*Impact: real creation of successful life opportunities for someone who may otherwise have chosen a different path in life*

*Student affected by short stature studying an HNC in Business. The standard college desk / chair is not appropriate for her to sit or work on for any extended period. ES conduct an ergonomic assessment of her workspace and thereafter purchase a height adjustable chair and desk to accommodate her body*

*frame. On achieving her qualifications she is accepted onto a degree course at a local university, The college loan the university the equipment until such time that the purchase 'kit' of their own.*

*Student studying NC Computing is severely affected by epilepsy to the point that neurosurgery is recommended and conducted on them to assist in the control of the attacks. Significant memory loss is a result of this intrusive intervention. ES staff work with her on a 1:1 with regards to memory techniques, mind mapping as a means to developing her thoughts, note taking skills, etc. on achieving the NC the student articulates onto the HNC Computer Networking course and successfully applies for the Disabled Students Allowance after a Needs Assessment is conducted by ES staff*

*Twenty nine year old student who has Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) applies for a NC Computing at our college. Previously he has studied 'special programmes' at other colleges for those diagnosed on the spectrum. Induction for the course is conducted in the Lecture Theatre with students from many courses. The thought of being amongst so many other people is causing great concern to the point that he did not attend the first session organised. ES staff were made aware of this fact and contacted his family to arrange an interview where possible support strategies could be discussed. The agreed support for the interview was that a member of the ES staff would meet him at the Reception on the day of the Induction. They would then sit with him and have a coffee before accompanying him to the Lecture Theatre. Rather than go into the room with him they would wait in the anteroom next to this room although still in the 'line of sight' for the student. The induction went well and the student meets weekly with a member of ES to discuss how the week has went. 1:1 study skills, proofreading of reports prior to submission are also provided.*

*Deaf student for whom British Sign Language is their first language comes to college to study Beauty Therapy. A BSL Facilitator is provided for all classes and also to accompany them at breaks to assist with the social interaction with their peers. For all theoretical classes a note taker is also provided as the student is unable to simultaneously take notes and watch the signer. After achieving the NC course, the student articulated onto the HND Holistic Therapy course. Her confidence in the English Language has developed to the point that when on her work experience in a local Hospice she did not have the support of a BSL Facilitator.*