Newbattle Abbey College
Colaiste Abaid a'Bhatail Nuaidh

Public Sector Equality Duty Report

2025-29

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1. Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 created the duty for public bodies to produce and publish a report outlining how they will eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. The public bodies are required to publish the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Report every four years.

The report should explain the Equality Outcomes the body will work towards in order to improve equality for those who have a protected characteristic.

Although Newbattle Abbey College is not a public body, it is bound by the requirement to publish a report as it receives grant funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

The Equality Act 2010 defines 9 protected characteristics:

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

There are three aspects of the general equality duty that Newbattle Abbey College need to consider when carrying out functions of the Equality Act:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it.

In addition to the general duty, Newbattle Abbey College has a specific duty to:

- report progress on mainstreaming the Public Sector Equality Duty
- publish equality outcomes and report progress
- assess new or revised policies and practices
- review existing policies and practices
- gather, use and publish employee information
- publish gender pay gap information
- publish an equal pay statement

2. Newbattle Abbey College Context

Newbattle Abbey College is unique in the college sector in Scotland in terms of its origins, size and governance. The estate in which the College is situated was left in trust by the 11th Marquis of Lothian in 1937 to be utilised as an adult education college.

The College still operates under the terms of the trust, the Trustees of which have historically included the Principals and Vice Chancellors of Scotland's ancient universities. The College itself is governed by its Board of Directors and sits outwith the regional college structure as a specialist college. Core funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) currently amounts to approximately 52% of our total income. The balance of our income is generated through a portfolio of funding and through commercial activities, the income from which is invested back into our curriculum and infrastructure to support our purpose.

We have a proven track record of meeting the needs of adults and young people at points of transition. By providing transformative learning and offering extensive support, the college helps people change their lives and achieve their personal ambitions.

Our current curriculum includes HNC/Associate Degree in Social Sciences, Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) Arts and Humanities, NC Social Science, NC Rural Skills and Preparation for Learning and Work courses. The HNC/Associate Degree programme is delivered via our long-standing partnership with Queen Margaret University.

The College secures grant funding from various sources to support a range of other access programmes and provision in response to identified need, often in partnership with community or voluntary organisations. These programmes utilise our own credit-rated awards, such as Forest and Outdoor Learning Awards (FOLA) and Adult Achievement Awards (AAA). These awards are also delivered by other organisations, including schools, local authorities and third-sector organisations, to hundreds of learners each year across Scotland.

2.1 Leadership and Governance

Our senior leadership team comprises three posts: Principal, Depute Principal and Director of Operations (one male and two females, at the time of publication). The senior leadership provide a clear lead in our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, demonstrated through their actions and through their interactions with staff, students, partners and stakeholders.

This commitment is embodied in our Strategic Plan and in our values, to be ***inclusive, caring, forward-thinking, empowering*** and ***collaborative***. It is embedded and promoted in our policies and in our practices. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee, comprising staff and students and chaired by the Depute Principal, oversees the College's approach to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. It monitors and ensures our compliance with legislative requirements and monitors the effectiveness of our policies and practices in maintaining and promoting a fair and inclusive environment for all.

The EDI Committee reports via the senior leadership to the Board of Directors and its committees. The senior leadership team meets formally on a monthly basis and Equality and Diversity is a standing item on every agenda.

The College's Board of Directors is made up of between 14 and 18 members, in accordance with our Articles of Association. The membership includes the Principal, two elected student

representatives and two elected staff representatives. Independent members and the Chair are recruited through an open recruitment process, overseen by the Board. The Board is committed through its recruitment processes to ensuring a diverse membership. In April 2025, the Board had 16 members: eight female and eight male.

The Board is accountable for the College as a responsible employer, leading and exemplifying the College's approach to equality and diversity. The Board's Finance and Resources Committee monitors access, inclusion, and equalities activity and policy across the College with regard to staff, and its Learning and Teaching Committee provides the same function with regard to students. Both committees report on these matters to the full Board.

3. Mainstreaming Equality

Newbattle Abbey College takes a proactive approach to mainstreaming its general equality duty. Our policies and practices aim to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity for all and foster good relations across the College community. This approach is grounded in our values, particularly:

Inclusive – we actively promote and embrace diversity and we are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, and:

Caring – we act with compassion, integrity and respect at all times, whether supporting our students and visitors or working with our partners and colleagues.

The College values diversity and aims to provide an environment that is inclusive, supportive and free from offensive, threatening, humiliating, or intimidating behaviour. The Dignity and Respect Policy sets out the College's commitment to fostering a culture where all staff, students, and visitors are treated with dignity and respect. The Policy was developed with staff and student consultation and helps to ensure that any incidents or allegations of bullying, harassment, victimisation, intimidation or discrimination are taken seriously, investigated thoroughly, and resolved fairly.

Our staff recruitment and selection procedure is informed by equality legislation and best practice, and we aim to build a staff team that represents a variety of backgrounds and characteristics. Reasonable adjustments are made to support candidates in the recruitment process and to support staff to carry out their roles.

In response to our changing student profile, including a high proportion of students from a care experienced background, the College developed and delivered bespoke staff training in partnership with *Who Cares? Scotland* and *Women's Aid*. Recognising that traditional, off-the-shelf training does not fully align with the close-knit and personal nature of our College community, we worked closely with these organisations to design a programme that meets the specific needs of our staff and students.

Newbattle's unique environment fosters personal connections, with staff across all departments including housekeeping, catering, and administration, playing a vital role in the student experience. Our whole-college approach ensures that all staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to support students who have experienced trauma, domestic abuse, or are in care, aligning with our corporate parenting responsibilities. This commitment to trauma-informed practice is reflected in feedback from our students. For example, *Case Study 1* illustrates the positive impact of this approach, where the tailored support and understanding from all staff contributed to a successful transition and ongoing engagement.

> **Case Study 1: Supporting Care-Experienced Students at Newbattle Abbey College (NAC)**
>
> At 35 years old, Suzanne had faced significant challenges throughout her life. She had been in and out of the care system since she was 5 years old and became a mother at 14. Suzanne had additional challenges including dyslexia, ADHD, and a physical disability caused by nerve damage.

After negative experiences in further education and employment, Suzanne reached out to the Hub for Success, an organisation dedicated to supporting care-experienced individuals in higher education, and was signposted to Newbattle Abbey College. This marked the beginning of Suzanne's educational transformation.

"*Newbattle made my heart change, made my soul change, made everything inside me light up.*" "*The world needs to know about Newbattle!*" (Suzanne)

The College's unique environment, with its welcoming community and supportive staff, played a crucial role in Suzanne's success. Like many care-experienced students, Suzanne faced numerous challenges when returning to education. She had previously known about her dyslexia, but the tailored support from the College finally enabled her to achieve academically. One of the most significant breakthroughs in Suzanne's journey was receiving a diagnosis for ADHD. She reflects on this discovery, saying, "*I was lost in the system, but Newbattle got me the support I needed. That helped me loads; I understand so much more about myself, and I'm taking that with me into university.*"

Suzanne found comfort in knowing she wasn't the only care-experienced student at NAC. The college has a relatively high proportion of care-experienced students, and Suzanne was a proud member of the Care Leavers group. "*I am a care leaver, and I am a proud care leaver. I am proud to tell the world where I came from. We all opened up and started speaking about it...being in a nice and supportive environment that meant people were able to be honest.*" "*Care-experienced people can all achieve, but we need places like Newbattle to be able to do so.*"

Throughout her time at NAC, Suzanne remained closely connected to the Hub for Success. The Hub, and the College's involvement with it, were instrumental in providing the support Suzanne needed both during her time at college and as she transitioned to university.

Now as a first year undergraduate at university, Suzanne feels equipped to face the challenges ahead, thanks to the skills and support she gained at NAC. "*I've learned skills to take forward – I can now deal with the challenges that I'm facing at uni.*"

The College attracts adults and young people from a range of backgrounds and many have suffered disadvantage. In response to a significant increase in the number of students declaring a disability (see *Student Profile*), the College proactively increased student support measures. This included increasing the size of the Student Support team and establishing the Wellbeing and Support Lead role in 2024-25 to provide comprehensive support, including attendance monitoring, wellbeing interventions, and coordination with residential students.

Midlothian Council's *Pathways* programme is hosted on campus; the programme provides vital support for young people, particularly those at risk of disengagement. The College also collaborates with Mayfield and Easthouses Youth 2000 Project (Y2K, see *Case Study 2*) to co-deliver programmes that have opened crucial new pathways into education for some of the most disadvantaged learners in our community. These partnerships have enabled us to reach learners

who may not have previously considered further education, offering a supportive and accessible entry point into college programmes.

> **Case Study 2: Bridging the Gap for Disengaged Youth**
>
> The partnership between Newbattle Abbey College (NAC) and Mayfield and Easthouses Youth 2000 Project (Y2K) was born out of a shared recognition of the barriers faced by young people in the local community, particularly those who have left school without a positive destination. Many of these individuals experience low confidence, limited life skills, and uncertainty about their future prospects. For those aged 16 to 21, the transition to adulthood can be fraught with challenges, and for some, further education or employment may seem out of reach.
>
> Funded by Midlothian Council, the partnership project aimed to bridge this gap by offering a structured, yet flexible, 12-week programme. Participants were given the opportunity to develop essential life skills, gain qualifications, and explore their next steps. The project combined the strengths of Y2K's youth work-led approach with NAC's expertise in delivering education and accreditation through the Adult Achievement Award (AAA) at SCQF levels 2 to 6. By embedding the college experience within a supportive youth work environment, the project created a safe space for young people to build their confidence and skills while considering their future.
>
> The highly supportive nature of the programme means that cohorts are necessarily small, however, the impact of the programme has been significant. Of the participants who completed the first cohort, 75% went on to take up a place on a course at Newbattle Abbey College, with some progressing on to further learning.
>
> > *"I never wanted to go to college. I really didn't like school, so I didn't want to do anything like that again. When I started the Prep for Next Steps group, I was really surprised at how much I enjoyed it. I liked that it wasn't about forcing us to do something we didn't want to do—it was more about helping us figure out our own goals. I am so much more confident now and go to college at Newbattle Abbey."*
> > *(participant)*
>
> For many of the young people involved, the programme has not just been about accessing education; it has been a holistic experience that has improved their wellbeing and self-confidence. Several participants reported improvements in areas such as sleep, diet, and mental health, as well as a greater openness to meeting new people and trying new experiences. As one young person explained, *"It wasn't just about college though; it was about helping us to become happier and more positive too."*

In 2023-24, we delivered Prescribe Nature programmes in partnership with Women's Aid. Women participating in these programmes applied their learning by creating a therapeutic healing garden

within the college grounds. This initiative not only supported the women's recovery and wellbeing but also helped them build practical and transferable skills. When Women's Aid moved to new premises, the women were able to transfer this learning, developing a new garden in their own space. The college continues to offer Prescribe Nature and other outdoor and nature-based programmes, utilising available grant funding, reinforcing our commitment to providing therapeutic and educational pathways for vulnerable groups.

4. Student Profile

The student data below, for the years 2021-22 to 2023-24, are analysed by the protected characteristics of gender (including trans), age and disability. Due to the low student numbers, statistical analysis and reporting of the other protected characteristics for these years is not appropriate.

The College has recently improved its data collection and reporting processes and will continue to monitor all protected characteristics in order to identify shifts in demographic.

Care Experienced students are not covered by the Equality Act 2010. However, it is important to note that students with experience of the care system make up a significant proportion of the student population at the College in any given year. There is also a high instance of Care Experienced students declaring a disability (100% in 2023-24).

Table 1: care experienced student enrolments

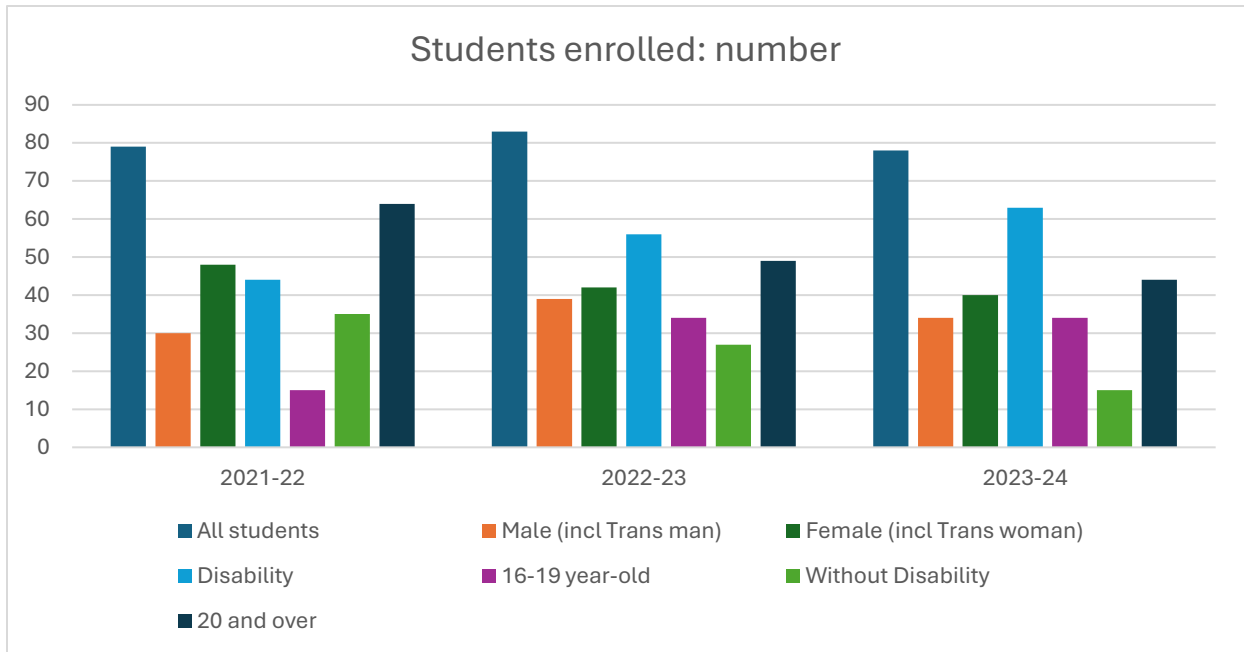| Year	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24	
	Enrolled		**Enrolled**		**Enrolled**	
Key group:	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
All students	**79**		**83**		**78**	
Care Experienced	17	21.5%	20	24.1%	12	15.4%

The data below are for students enrolled on our Scottish Funding Council (SFC) funded programmes: Preparation for FE/Learning & Work; NC Rural Skills; SWAP/NC Social Science; HNC Social Science (in partnership with Queen Margaret University).

Equalities data is initially collected at enrolment as declared by the student. Some students may not declare the information at enrolment. Some students are unaware of, or do not have a diagnosis of, a disability (such as dyslexia) until after enrolment. In most cases the enrolment record is updated after a disability is diagnosed and/or declared.
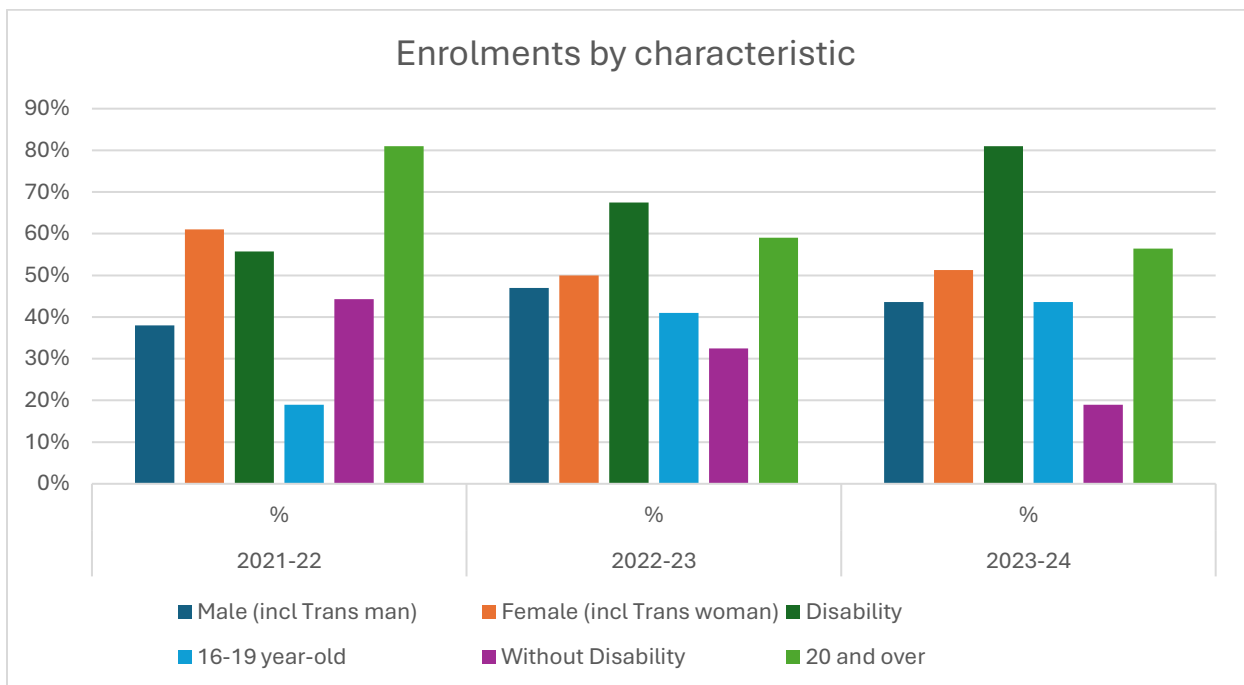
Table 2: student enrolment and success data by student characteristics

Year	2021-22 (1 preferred not to give gender)				2022-23 (2 preferred not to give gender)				2023-24 (4 preferred not to give gender)			
	Enrolled		**Completed: Successful**		**Enrolled**		**Completed: Successful**		**Enrolled**		**Completed: Successful**	
Key group:	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
All students	**79**		**44**	55.7%	**83**		**58**	69.9%	**78**		**52**	66.6%
Male (incl Trans man)	30	38%	15	50%	39	47%	30	77%	34	43.6%	24	70.6%
Female (incl Trans woman)	48	61%	28	58.3%	42	50%	26	61.9%	40	51.3%	24	60%
Disability	44	55.7%	24	54.5%	56	67.5%	40	71.4%	63	81%	40	63.5%
16-19 year-old	15	19%	7	46.7%	34	41%	20	58.8%	34	43.6%	28	82.3%
Without Disability	35	44.3%	20	57%	27	32.5%	18	66.6%	15	19%	12	80%
20 and over	64	81%	37	57%	49	59%	38	77.5%	44	56.4%	24	54.5%

4.1 Enrolments

Students enrolled: number

Chart showing number of students enrolled across three years (2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24) by category.

Legend:
- All students
- Male (incl Trans man)
- Female (incl Trans woman)
- Disability
- 16-19 year-old
- Without Disability
- 20 and over

Approximate values:

2021-22: All students 79, Male 30, Female 48, Disability 44, 16-19 year-old 15, Without Disability 35, 20 and over 64

2022-23: All students 83, Male 39, Female 42, Disability 56, 16-19 year-old 34, Without Disability 27, 20 and over 49

2023-24: All students 78, Male 34, Female 40, Disability 63, 16-19 year-old 34, Without Disability 15, 20 and over 44

The total number of students enrolled remained fairly steady over the three-year period, although the credit threshold (funded places) from SFC reduced slightly in 2023-24.

Enrolments by characteristic

Chart showing percentage enrolments by characteristic across three years.

Legend:
- Male (incl Trans man)
- Female (incl Trans woman)
- Disability
- 16-19 year-old
- Without Disability
- 20 and over

Approximate values:

2021-22: Male 38%, Female 61%, Disability 55%, 16-19 year-old 19%, Without Disability 44%, 20 and over 81%

2022-23: Male 47%, Female 50%, Disability 67%, 16-19 year-old 41%, Without Disability 32%, 20 and over 59%

2023-24: Male 43%, Female 51%, Disability 81%, 16-19 year-old 43%, Without Disability 19%, 20 and over 56%

4.1.1 Gender

The majority of students enrolled each year were female, with the gender gap narrowing over the period from 23 percentage points (pp) in 2021-22 to 7 pp in 2023-24. The college sector

benchmark[1] is close to a 50/50 split overall; however, there are significant gender disparities across subject areas.

4.1.2 Disability

The percentage of students with a disability remained high overall (81% in 2023-24), more than three-times the latest sector benchmark of 25.3%[2], and increased by 25 pp over the period.

4.1.3 Age

The age profile of students changed significantly, with the proportion of students aged between 16 and 19 years old increasing from 19% to 44% (25 pp) over the three years. This is more in line with the sector overall, where 41% are 20 years old or younger.

4.2 Success Rates
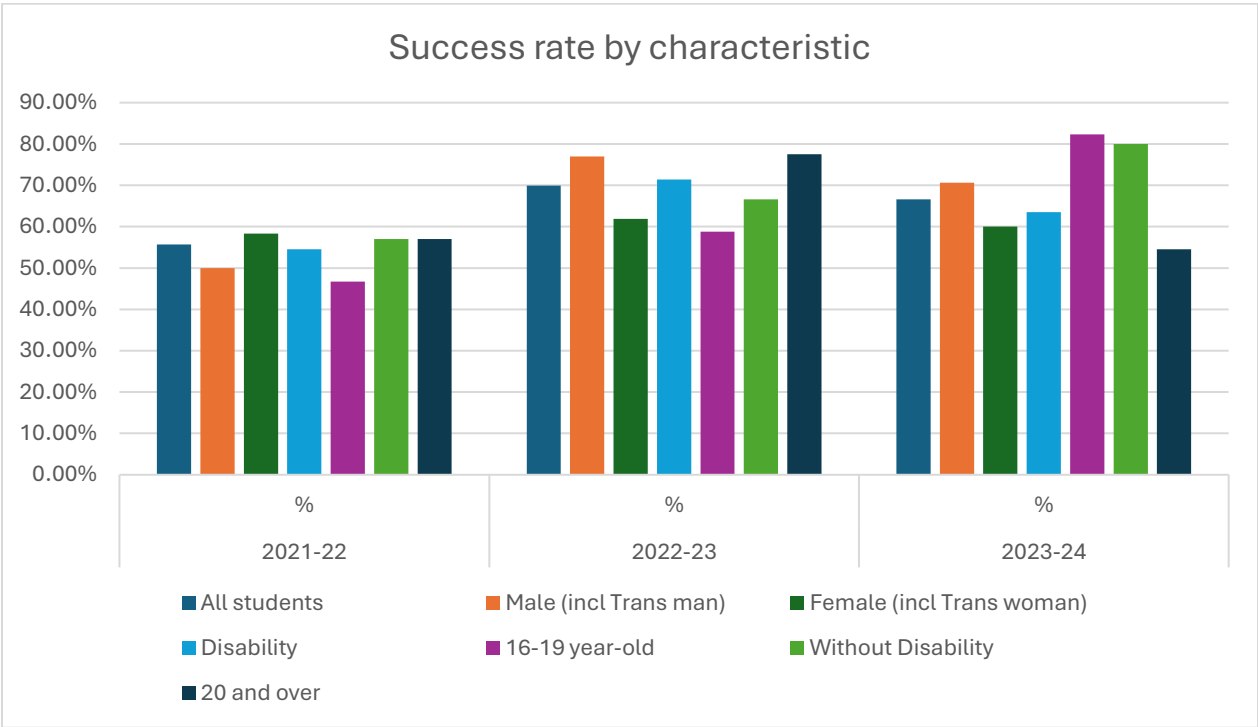
Successful completion rates overall (all students) have improved by 10.9 pp over the period. They reached 69.9% in 2022-23.

[1] College performance indicators 2022-23 (SFC, May 2024): to provide further context only. The small number of students and the narrow curriculum at Newbattle make meaningful comparisons difficult.

[2] Ibid

4.2.1 Gender

The comparative performance, in terms of successful completion, between male and female students has changed over the last three years.

Male student success rates improved from 50% to 71% (21 pp) over the three years, whereas success rates for female students improved from 58.3% to 60% (1.7 pp). In 2023-24, male students out-performed female students by 11 pp.

The latest college sector figures show that male students on further education (FE) programmes overall out-perform female students by 6.7 pp. However, gender occupation/subject segregation and variances in success rates by subject area also play a part in the overall picture.

4.2.2 Disability

The comparative performance of students without a disability and those with a disability has fluctuated over the three years.

There was a negative 'attainment gap' of only 2.5 pp between the groups in 2021-22. In 2022-23, success rates for students with a disability were 4.4 pp higher than for those without a disability. However, in 2023-24 success rates for students with a disability were 16.5 pp lower than those for students without a disability.

The latest sector figures which show a 4 pp gap overall between success rates for all students and for those with a disability. Students with a disability make up a significantly higher proportion of the overall student body at Newbattle than is the case nationally - 81% in 2023-24 compared to a sector level of 25.3%.

4.2.3 Age

The performance of younger students, aged 16 to 19 years old, has steadily and significantly improved over the three years. Success rates went from 46.7% in 2021-22 to 82.3% in 2023-24: a 35.6 pp increase. In 2023-24 they were 15.7 pp higher than success rates for all students and 27.3 pp higher than for students aged 20 years and over.

This is well above the sector level, where success rates for students aged 20 years-old or younger across the sector as a whole are 59.4%, compared to 68% for all students.

Success rates for students aged 20 and over spiked to a high of 78% in 2022-23, then fell sharply again in 2023-24 to 55%.

5. Staff Profile

At the time of writing this report the college employs 42 members of staff totaling 31 FTE. The college annually collects data on all staff members to submit a staffing return to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The information provided in this report has come from the latest SFC staffing returns.

Human Resources staff collect equality data on protected characteristics through the recruitment process.

The staff data below is for the years 2019-20 and 2023-24: the year before the previous Equalities report and the year prior to this report. The data are analysed by the protected characteristics of gender (including trans), and age only. Due to the low number of staff and very low instance of other protected characteristics, statistical analysis and reporting of the other protected characteristics is not appropriate.

Table 3: staff by gender

Gender	2019-20	2023-24
Male	37%	34%
Female	63%	66%

Table 4: staff by age

Age	2019-20	2023-24
24 &under	0	0
25-30	14%	7%
31-35	12%	7%
36-40	8%	14%
41-45	2%	10%
46-50	8%	14%
51-55	14%	19%
56-60	27%	19%
61-65	6%	7%
66 and over	9%	3%

The College aims to improve the collection, analysis, monitoring and reporting of staff data over the next reporting period.

6. Occupational Segregation

The College understands the matters relating to occupational segregation, particularly in relation to gender norms and stereotyping of roles, and that jobs associated with low pay are more likely to be carried out by women. Jobs with part-time hours are often more suitable for those with caring responsibilities, which again is more likely to be women. This can also lead to an under-representation of women at more senior levels.

Around 70% of roles at the College are part-time, with most of these roles being in Central Administration, Catering and Housekeeping. The overwhelming majority of staff in these areas are female (89% at the time of writing). This reflects the national picture, where 81% of people in service jobs and 72% of those in administrative or secretarial jobs are women [3].

The majority of staff in higher paid roles such as Lecturer (including promoted Lecturer post) and Senior Management are also female (currently 58%). The Senior Management Team is made up of one male and two females. Of the six other management level post-holders, five are male and one is female.

7. Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap is the difference in average earnings between women and men across an organisation. It is not the same as equal pay (which refers to paying men and women the same for the same work), but rather reflects broader structural issues such as occupational segregation, part-time work, and career progression barriers.

In 2019-20, the mean gender pay gap in the College was 13.9%. In 2023-24 this had narrowed slightly to 13.1%. The latest figures for Scotland show that the national mean gender pay gap is 8.3%[4].

8. Equal Pay Statement

The College recognises that, historically, women were often paid less than men for doing the same work. Equal pay legislation gives the right for men and women to be paid the same for equivalent work. Equal pay covers contractual pay and non-cash contractual benefits. The law gives a woman the right to the same pay as a man (and vice-versa) for the following:

- Like work – two employees who are doing the same or very similar roles.

- Work rated as equivalent – two employees could be carrying out totally different jobs, but they have been given the same rating as the result of the analytical job evaluation scheme.

- Work of equal value – two jobs are very different, but the employee claims they require a similar level of skill and ability.

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[3] Close the Gap | Statistics (accessed April 2025)
[4] Ibid

Equal pay is often, but not exclusively, a gender issue. Under the Equality Act (2010) equal pay protection has been extended to all other protected characteristics. The College is committed to providing and promoting equal opportunities for all employees regardless of sex, race, religion or belief, age, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or disability. All employees receive equal pay for work of equal value. The College pay and reward systems are transparent, based on objective criteria (using job evaluation) and free from bias in relation to all aspects of equalities. The College will regularly review the pay and reward system and act where necessary to eliminate any discrimination.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee is responsible for monitoring this equal pay statement. It will be reviewed every three years (or earlier if required), making amendments as appropriate in consultation with staff.

9. Equalities Outcomes 2021-2025 - Review

In the 2021- 2025 reporting cycle the college established four outcomes:

- A safer college community is created for female staff and students because of the college's response to tackling the inequalities experienced through gender-based violence (GBV).

- Students are better equipped in managing their mental health through an accessible infrastructure which does not affect their academic achievements.

- Learners have increased digital inclusion from the digital learning infrastructure. Older and disabled students face fewer barriers with digital accessibility.

- Staff and students are confident that they are represented in the college community. Participation is fully accessible and inclusive regardless of gender, race, disability, and sexual orientation.

Some of these outcomes were carried over from the 2017-2021 equality outcome reporting cycle as it was felt at the time that these were still current.

The outcomes for 2021-25 looked to focus on issues that had been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic impacted the College, its students and staff, directly until the end of the 2021-22 academic year. Beyond 2021-22, the residual impact was significant as the College and its staff and students dealt with both the economic and social consequences. Despite the challenges these presented, progress was made against the previous equalities outcomes.

Awareness of gender-based violence has risen and there are better processes in place to deal with any reported instances. A partnership with *Women's Aid* is well established and has supported staff training as well as aiding the recovery of women who have suffered domestic abuse. However, the issue is still prevalent in society and therefore it is appropriate that the College continues to focus on the issue as an outcome for the next reporting period.

Support for students with mental health issues has improved. The *Support for Learning Team* has been reviewed, changed and enhanced to become the *Student Support and Wellbeing Team*, in response to the changing and greater need of our student body. This need continues to evolve and therefore the College will continue to have effective support for student mental health as an outcome going forward. Reflecting the evolving need, we will also focus on support for neurodiverse students in our new outcomes.

Our work to improve digital inclusion has been successful, with our *Digital Transformation Project* delivering an accessible digital infrastructure for all students and staff. A new staff post has been created, *IT Services and Digital Support Officer*, to ensure that the College's digital infrastructure and support continues to meet staff and student needs.

Good progress was also made on our outcome to improve representation across the College. Staff and students are represented on all the College's refreshed management committees, and care is taken to ensure that the representation reflects our diverse College community. We now have a

Management Information System by way of a shared service with a partner college. This has greatly improved our student data collection, analysis and reporting. As a result of the analysis of the data, quantitative and qualitative, we have chosen to focus in our new outcomes on ensuring the College environment is safe and welcoming for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff and students and for students of all ages.

10. Equalities Outcomes – 2025-2029

An equality outcome specifies a result that the college wishes to achieve within the reporting cycle to further one or more of the needs in the general equality duty, which are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.

- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- Foster good relations between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it.

To gather evidence for these outcomes, consultations were held with the College's EDI committee which is made up of representative group of staff and students.

Equality Outcome 1

Protected Characteristic: Sexual Orientation

Inequality:

LGBT Youth Scotland's 'Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People (2022)' survey found that 32% of LGBT+ students (down from 44% in 2017) rated their experience at college as 'good', 59% of the students (up from 51% in 2017) rated their college experience as 'ok' and 9% (up from 5% in 2017) rated their college experience as bad. The survey also found that just 48% reported that they felt supported as an LGBT+ person in their educational environment, with 26% saying they did not feel supported. Suggestions from students on how they could feel more supported included curricula including lessons on LGBT+ issues, LGBT+ inclusive facilities being available and staff being proactive in acting inclusively and tackling discriminatory behaviour when they see it.

At the time of writing, an analysis of current student data (2024-25) shows a statistically significant increase in student's declaring their sexual orientation as other than heterosexual/straight. While the confidential declaration itself is a positive indication, the College needs to ensure that the environment is a positive one for all for students and staff.

Outcome: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual staff and students report that they feel safe and supported being 'out' at the college

Outputs:

- Create new, and develop existing, college partnerships with LGBT+ friendly charities and organisations (e.g. MyPas) to support the outcome

- Provide LGBT+ training and materials for staff

- Increase support and awareness on campus through visible cues – posters, staff/student lanyards, etc – and through opportunities within the curriculum.

Equality Outcome 2

Protected Characteristic: Gender (Gender-Based Violence (GBV))

Inequality:

Newbattle Abbey College recognises that most gender-based violence is perpetrated by men, although there are some female perpetrators. We understand that gender-based violence covers sexual orientation and that gender-based violence can occur in same sex relations.

In our previous outcomes 2021-2025 we acknowledged that the EHRC's *Is Scotland Fairer* (2018) report tells us that women and disabled people are more likely to experience domestic abuse, and often the perpetrator is their partner. In cases of rape and sexual violence these are more than likely not reported to the police. In the updated EHRC's *Is Scotland Fairer* (2022) report it shows that women are still more likely to experience sexual assault and sex-based violence and as such at Newbattle Abbey College we are continuing our work on Gender-Based Violence and it will remain one of our equalities outcomes for 2025-2029.

Throughout the consultation process of equality outcomes, the theme of gender-based violence was prevalent and it was apparent that this had an impact on members of our College community.

The Scottish Government *Equally Safe Strategy* (2018) shows that gender inequality is the root cause of gender-based violence and in its basic form a human rights issue.

Outcome: A safer college community is created for female staff and students because of the college's response to tackling Gender Based Violence (GBV).

Outputs:

- Implement a Gender-Based Violence Policy that safeguards staff and students when responding to incidences of GBV

- Maintain local partnership with Women's Aid

- Target work on raising awareness of GBV and the response within the college community.

- Train relevant staff to raise awareness of GBV and to recognise and provide appropriate support to those who experience GBV

- Actively promote gender equality

Equality Outcome 3

Protected Characteristic: Disability (Mental Health)

Inequality: In our 2021-2025 outcomes we acknowledged that poor mental health is a growing concern within society and will likely increase as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In our previous outcomes we highlighted that The Samaritans report *Dying from Inequality* (2017) identified the links between socioeconomic disadvantage and suicidal behaviour. The report also found that men are more vulnerable to the risk of suicide than women.

The Samaritans released a further report *To Thrive, Not Just Survive* (2023) in which they highlighted the impacts that many people in the UK have felt due to the unstable economy caused by the pandemic and subsequently the 'cost of living crisis' that has occurred. The report highlighted that while suicide is complex and rarely caused by one factor, and that there is a clear link between suicide, mental ill-health and financial hardship.

The College has been responsive to the needs of staff and students, but it is clear the impact of mental health issues is continuing to have adverse effects on students' ability to carry out their studies as well as day-to-day activities.

Outcome: Students who declare a mental health condition report that they feel well supported at college

Outputs:

- Develop partnerships with relevant mental health organisations to improve support for students and staff

- Ensure clear information is available to students around financial support available to them in times of hardship to alleviate mental health strain

- Create a 'Fitness to Study' Policy that allows individuals to engage effectively as learners

- Continue to provide mental health information, support and services which are accessible to staff and students.

Equality Outcome 4

Protected Characteristic: Disability (Neurodiversity)

Inequality:

The college sector benchmark for students with a disability sits at 25.3%. At Newbattle Abbey College, in recent years, the number of students with an identified disability has been substantially

higher than this benchmark and is growing: 55.7% (2021-22), 67.5% (2022-23), 81% (2023-2024). In academic year 2023-2024 success rates of student with an identified disability was 16.5% lower than students without a disability.

Within the number of students with identified disabilities, the proportion who identify as being neurodiverse are also increasing. Neurodiversity can vary significantly from one person to another and the challenges that each neurodivergent person faces are likely to be different. With neurodivergent students making up a significant proportion of Newbattle Abbey Colleges students each year, it is important that the College supports these students effectively throughout their studies.

Outcome: Neurodiverse students are successful and report feeling satisfied with the overall support and reasonable adjustments received, including from teaching staff, while on their course

Outputs:

- Improve staff understanding of neurodiversity and how it impacts learners

- Ensure Learning Support Processes from application to enrolment are effective in capturing and identifying neurodivergent students' support needs

- Ensure teaching staff understand Learning Support Plans and how to implement support correctly in the classroom

Equality Outcome 5

Protected Characteristic: Age

Inequality:

Newbattle Abbey College has historically had more students aged 20 and over compared to those aged 16-19. However, these numbers have been moving towards being more balanced in the last few years. In 2021-22 students aged 20 and over made up 81% of Newbattle students compared with 2022-23 (59%) and 2023-24 (56.4%).

Concurrently, completion success rates of students aged 16-19 have improved during this period (from 46.7% in 2021-22 to 82.3% in 2023-24) while the success rates of students aged 20 and over has been less stable (57% in 2021-22 increasing to 77.5% in 2022-23 then dropping to 54.5% in 2023-24%).

Our success rates for student 16-19 are well above the sector level, where success rates as a whole for this group are 59.4%. However, it is important that we address the fluctuation in our success rates for older students. Although a number of factors influence success rates, we need to ensure that our learning environment meets the needs of students of all ages with varying life

responsibilities and experiences. It is important that we ensure that staff are aware of the different challenges that our students may be facing depending on their age and the stage at which they are entering their learning journey.

Outcome: Ensuring a successful learning environment for students of all ages

Outputs:

- Improve staff understanding of the different challenges faced by mature students and younger students

- Improve staff understanding of unpaid caring responsibilities and the support that is available to unpaid carers

- Provide a learning environment that is positive for all ages.

11. Conclusion

These five Equality Outcomes focus on the protected characteristics of:

- Age

- Disability

- Gender reassignment

- Sex

- Sexual orientation

Protected characteristics that have not been a focus of the Equality Outcomes in this reporting round are:

- Marriage and civil partnership

- Race

- Pregnancy and maternity

- Religion or belief

The above protected characteristics are embedded in the mainstreaming of equality within the College and there is no data that would suggest that these should have been made into a specific equality outcome for the 2025-2029 cycle. However, the College will continue to analyse and monitor all protected characteristics for students and staff.

Newbattle Abbey College will continue to meet the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and will have due regard in eliminating discrimination, foster good relations, and advance equality of opportunity for those with protected characteristics.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee will take the lead in embedding equalities into Newbattle Abbey College and will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the new Equality Outcomes:

- Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual staff and students report that they feel safe and supported being 'out' at the college

- A safer college community is created for female staff and students because of the college's response to tackling Gender Based Violence (GBV) and active promotion of gender equality.

- Students who declare a mental health condition report that they feel well supported at college

- Neurodiverse students are successful and report feeling satisfied with the overall support and reasonable adjustments received, including from teaching staff, while on their course

- Ensuring a successful learning environment for students of all ages

A report detailing the progress of these outcomes will be published in April 2027.