

# Equality & Diversity

Annual Report 2016/17



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## Our Commitment

Wigan & Leigh College is committed to creating an environment where learners, staff, governors, visitors and other stakeholders actively promote equality and diversity, tackle bullying and discrimination and narrow the achievement gap. The College wants to ensure learners have excellent experiences so that they are well equipped for the next stage of their education, training and/or employment.

Our sentiment is for everyone at Wigan and Leigh College to have a duty to ensure equality and diversity is followed and implemented from both a legislative and moral perspective. Recognising, embracing and valuing difference ensures an inclusive environment through:

- a more vibrant staff and learner population;
- a more vibrant and better working and studying environment;
- attracting and retaining the very best staff and learners;
- achieving the goals set out in our Single Equality Scheme 2016-2020;
- improving the image of our College.

This report provides an overview of the College's activities in support of equality and diversity during the academic year 2016/17, including progress indicators towards its agreed equality objectives and a summary of key staff and student data

The College seeks to provide a safe, supportive environment for all its staff and learners in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect. The College welcomes individuals and groups from local, regional and international communities. The promotion of equality and diversity enables learners to reach their potential. The College values difference and diversity and will strive to create positive working relationships so that everyone can work and study to the best of their abilities, free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

This commitment is underpinned by our vision, mission and strategic ambition.

## Our Vision

To be a beacon of educational excellence and through partnership work transform the lives of the individuals and communities we serve.

## Our Values

- i. Teaching and learning is our first priority and the needs of our learners always come first.
- ii. As members of the College we are partners in the success of the organisation and are all accountable for our results.
- iii. High standards are at the heart of all that we do. In our pursuit of excellence we recognise that individually and collectively we can always improve.
- iv. Within our College community we all treat each other with respect, trust, openness, care and consideration. We listen to learners and staff and celebrate their success.
- v. We value equality and diversity.
- vi. We work in partnership and collaboration with others so that we can positively contribute to local, regional and national economic development.

## Our Strategic Aims

*To be a beacon of educational excellence transforming the lives of the individuals and communities we serve*



1. Quality: to become a Grade 1 College in the shortest possible time with:
  - outstanding quality in terms of teaching and learning and the student experience
  - exceptional levels of student care with an emphasis on good citizenship, employability skills and positive progression outcomes

- the creation of a College community with core values at its heart where staff and learners are nurtured so that we have high levels of morale together with creativity, innovation and excellence.
2. Growth: to expand our provision by being first choice for school leavers, adults and employers in Wigan and Leigh and the surrounding areas by specifically targeting increased participation rates for young people, engagement in HE provision at level 4 and above and Apprenticeship enrolment.
  3. Efficiency: to position the College financially up to 2020.
  4. Partnership: to work collaboratively with local and regional partners to develop an integrated learning model which provides high quality technical, vocational and work place education and training which re-engages young people and adults with education.

## **Policies**

The Equality Act 2010 outlines our responsibilities to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

The Equality Act brings together several pieces of previous legislation and expands the number of protected groups which are now:

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

We have a well-developed Single Equality Scheme and action plan which describe our unified approach and strong commitment to equality and diversity across the College community.

Since September 2015 the College has a duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and extremism. It also has a duty to promote Fundamental British Values, which includes democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

## **Working in partnership**

Wigan and Leigh College has expanded its multi-agency links, referring learners internally to Topaz counselling, and externally to the Safeguarding Hub, and the Early Intervention Service, CAMHS and YPDAS. There is also a comprehensive Additional Learning Support service in College which includes two health and well-being mentors.

The College has worked extensively with the local community and has introduced a College Chaplaincy service in order to engage with and provide support for all learners. The College has a student liaison network which provides a further point of contact for learners.

# Our Progress and Achievements

## Our Improvements and Impact

Our main documents to drive improvements are:

- The College's Strategic Aims
- The Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan
- Self-assessment reports (SARs), Student Review Boards, and Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs).

The College was previously a Two Ticks Employer and migrated to the new Disability Confident Scheme on 15th September 2016.

The College has been transferred straight through to Level 2 of the scheme as a Disability Confident employer. There are two key areas that the College has met assessment criteria in order to be awarded the status of Level 2 Disability Confident Employer. These are:



## Getting the right people for your business.

This includes:

- Looking to employ and retain disabled people through a commitment to the scheme in all recruitment material and advertisements.
- Work with Job Centre Plus on appointments, events and with other community partners on recruiting people with disabilities.
- Having a fully inclusive and accessible recruitment process.
- Offering an interview to disabled candidates who meet the minimum criteria for the job.
- Having flexibility when assisting people so that disabled job applicants have the best opportunity to demonstrate that they can do the job.
- Proactively offering and making reasonable adjustments as required.
- Encouraging our suppliers and partner firms to be disability confident.
- Ensuring employees have appropriate disability equality awareness.

## Keeping and developing your people.

This includes:

- Promoting a culture of being disability confident.
- Supporting employees to manage their disabilities or health conditions.
- Ensuring there are no barriers to the development and progression of disabled staff.
- Ensuring managers are aware of how they can support staff who are sick or absent from work.
- Valuing and listening to feedback from disabled staff.
- Reviewing the Disability Confident Employer self-assessment regularly.

## Progress against our Equality Objectives

All our equalities work is brought together into one Single Equality Scheme. It describes our commitment and provides clear objectives which will continue to drive equality forward at the College. Our Equality and Diversity Policy, which underpins College activity is reviewed and approved by Corporation annually. Equality policy and practice is monitored by the Equality and Diversity Committee which is chaired by the Vice Principal.

The College has set a number of key Equality and Diversity objectives for 2016-17 with a summary of progress identified in the following table:

## PROGRESS - EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY OBJECTIVES

### 1: Create equality of opportunity for all learners by maintaining a positive College community

- The College has worked hard to create opportunity for all by narrowing achievement gaps. Ofsted in 2016 identified that “Managers identify underperformance of groups of learners and act quickly to tackle inequality in achievement.”
- Inspirational guest speakers and external organisations, including a wide range of employers, public sector representatives and the voluntary and faith sector have supported the development of learners throughout the College and curriculum areas. For example:
  - The College welcomed guest speaker John Williams who suffers from cerebral palsy and has overcome life-limiting obstacles. John shared his story with learners, challenging perceptions of disability and encouraging them to identify areas where personal circumstances have falsely defined them.
  - State of Mind Sport is a charity that raises awareness of the issues surrounding mental health and wellbeing. Guest speakers from the Charity visited the College and encouraged learners to ‘Accept Who You Are’, emphasising and celebrating the differences and similarities between us regardless of age, skills, personality and lifestyle.
  - The College welcomed guest speaker Luke Ambler, a former professional rugby league player to talk with our learners regarding Mental Health. Luke is a well-known aspirational sports star within our area, and so many of our learners had knowledge of Luke’s rugby league career. Luke however shared his very personal story of the effect of young male suicide within his own family. Learners signed up to ‘It’s okay to talk’ and took selfies and retweeted them – indeed the college has retweeted the selfies in order to promote awareness of importance of talking therapies in terms of suicide prevention.
- Learners at Leigh College have taken part in the Leigh Christmas Challenge to raise money for the regional campaign -Cash for Kids Mission Christmas. This charity aims to provide a Christmas gift for 16,000 disadvantaged children across our region. Learners and staff collected both gifts and raised money to buy presents for this charity. Learners shared they were not aware of the numbers of children living in poverty the North West region, and indeed were happy to contribute and raise awareness of the socioeconomic issues within our local community.
- The Additional Learning Support Team held numerous promotional activities across the year to raise awareness of different disabilities and to help de-stigmatise support for these. These have included celebrating: ADH Awareness Week, National Eating Disorder Awareness Week and World Mental Health Week.
- College Chaplaincy continues to offer pastoral and personal support for staff and learners of all faiths and none, giving precious time and space to contemplate, explore emotions and morality with an emphasis on personal wellbeing.
- The Confucius Classroom provides free Mandarin lessons and Tai Chi classes which are available for staff and learners.

### 2: Provide a supportive ethos and high levels of mutual respect where discrimination is not tolerated and barriers to learning are removed.

- Equality and Diversity champions for each curriculum area lead and support the promotion

and embedding of Equality and Diversity within the curriculum area making topics relevant, celebratory and open for discussion. Activities promote respect for diversity and interpersonal equality among learners fostering classrooms that are participatory, co-operative, and democratic.

- Equality and Diversity Champions shared that staff in their teams felt more confident when managing discussions around different protected characteristics.
- Friday morning Learning Community training sessions have promoted this objective to further develop Teaching and Learning.
- Equality and Diversity is included in the new staff induction process.
- Equality and Diversity has been built into the Assessor Handbook and Apprentice Induction Handbook and will be built more robustly into Employer & Apprentice Inductions. Reviews have been adapted to include Equality and Diversity.
- The impact can be demonstrated in the latest Ofsted report in 2016:

*“Staff at all levels skilfully promote the value of diversity, so that learners demonstrate mutual respect and tolerance towards each other.”*

*“Teachers and tutors promote equality and raise awareness of diversity skilfully during lessons. They use topical subjects, such as the recent Presidential election in America, to stimulate debates on the principles of democracy, tolerance and respect.”*

*“Apprentices show respect for, and value the opinion of, staff and their peers. They have a good understanding of equality and diversity and how these themes may affect their practice in the workplace.”*

3: Reinforce the importance of disclosing personal information such as specific learning difficulties/disabilities, sexual orientation, and ethnicity by promoting how this information is used to drive equality forward and foster good relations.

- Enrolment form amended for 2017 and enrolment process reviewed to include late enrollees more effectively.
- A management information cross-referencing exercise has been completed. This has led to learners with difficulties and disabilities who may initially ‘have slipped through the net’ being contacted and offered support.
- All learners who had refused an initial offer of support have now been re-contacted twice and re-offered support. Parents of 16-18 year olds who have refused support have been contacted. As a result of these and other mechanisms, participation rates for ALS are extremely high with 97% of learners with learning difficulty/disability/mental ill health, (live disclosures) accessing some form of additional support.
- The Equality and Diversity data collection form is now included in application packs rather than just upon appointment of staff.
- A new HR and Payroll system tender process was completed with the specification including all Equality and Diversity data collection requirements. Staff training has now commenced
- The College achieved the Level 2 Disability Confident in September 2017

- Equality and Diversity champions have lead the way in promoting disclosure and liaising with the College Management Team to look at ways to enable staff to feel secure and supported. Factsheets and information will now replace the poster idea, and information disseminated through the staff newsletter

#### 4: Actively promote non-stereotypical recruitment and support attainment

- Ofsted identified how well the College addresses the diverse needs of learners. *“The integration of learners with high needs into mainstream college life is highly effective.”*
- Case studies developed for 5 female engineers launched on Women in Engineering day on 23 June 2017.



#### LAUREN CLARKSON

**Course:** HND Mechanical Engineering

“I studied A Levels after leaving school and was initially unsure of a career pathway but my passion for engineering was my inspiration to apply for the apprenticeship scheme. As a woman in engineering I find my role empowering. I've been provided with the opportunities, knowledge and inspiration to succeed”.

**Currently employed by:** Sellafield Ltd

- Other case studies developed for prospectus included: male florist, male hairdresser and male health & social care



#### LIAM MORAN

**Former School:** St.John Fisher High School

**Course:** Level 3 Extended Diploma in Health & Social Care

**Studying at:** Liverpool John Moores University

BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science

He hopes to gain employment within the NHS on completion of his course.

- Photographer has updated images from all curriculum areas. These will be used on the website and in the new 2018-19 marketing materials produced over the summer.
- Consultants have been appointed, as part of a College project to re-develop the dashboard to include Equality and Diversity related data.

# Our Community

The last census took place on 27 March 2011 with the results creating a snapshot of the Borough's population.

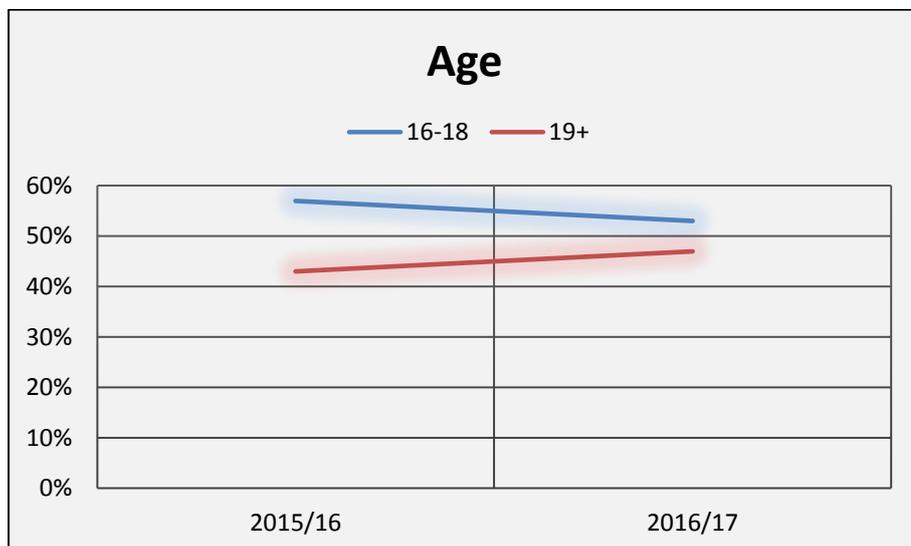
Male/Female ratio	Approximately 50%/50%
Average Age	40 years
Born in England	95.0%
English as a first language	98.1%
Other languages (Polish)	0.4%
Religion - Christian	77.8%
Religion - Muslim	0.7%
Religion - other	0.5%
No Religion	15.0%
Married	46.6%
Cohabit – opposite sex	12.9%
Cohabit – same sex	0.7%
Single	23.5%
Separated/Divorced	9.0%
Ethnicity - White British	95.5%
Ethnicity - Other White	1.3%
Ethnicity - Asian/Asian British	1.1%
Ethnicity - Other	2.1%

# Our Learners

We serve a local area which is predominately White British (95.5%). Some people in our communities experience disadvantage and deprivation due to social and economic hardship. During 2016/17, 56% learners came from disadvantaged areas. The College continues to grow in size and the following sections identify the volume of learners from different groups.

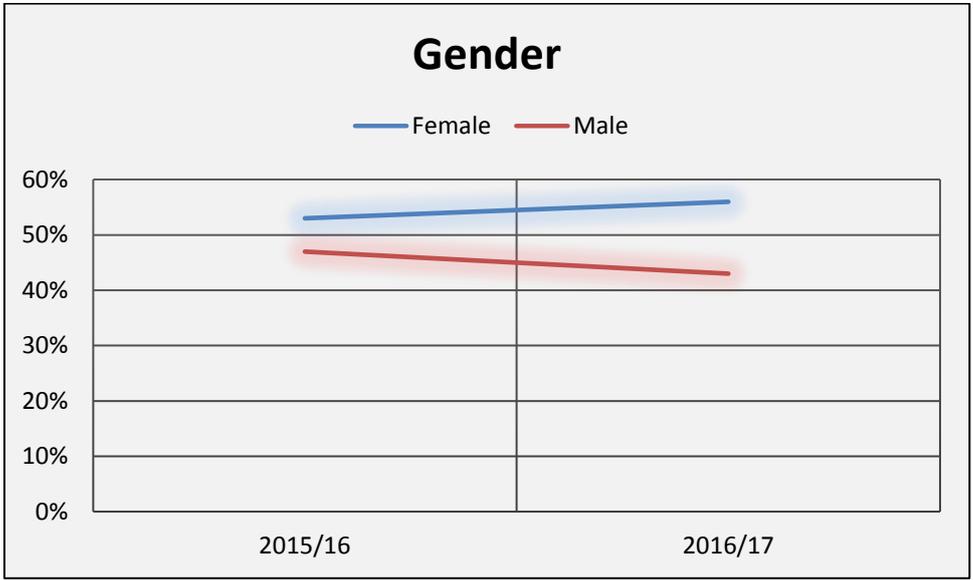
## Learners by Age Group

The largest cohort of learners continues to be 16-18 years of age but there has been an increase in the proportion of adult learners in 2016/17 due to an increase in ESOL (English as a second language) qualifications.



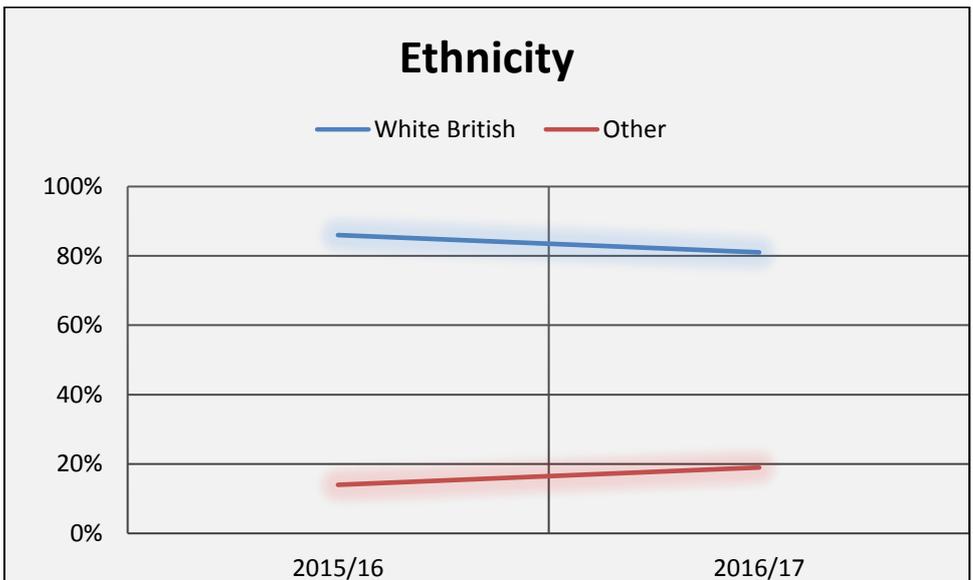
### Learners by Gender

Male participation rates are higher in the 16-18 cohort at 55% although the gap in participation is narrowing. Adult participation rates remain high for female learners at 69% and this contributes to the overall gap in participation rates.



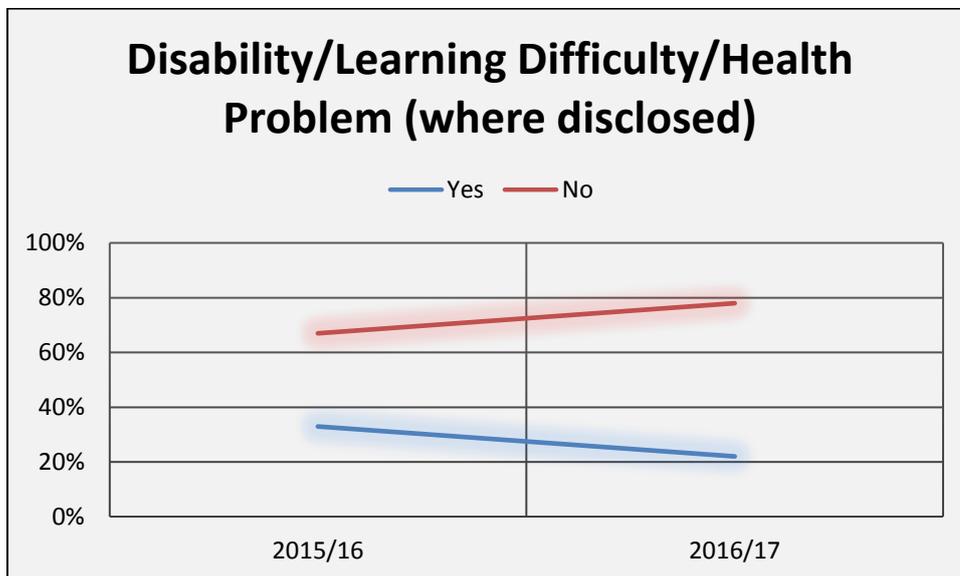
### Learners by Ethnicity

16-18 participation rates are in line with local population with regards to ethnicity. On adult courses, there has been an increase in participation rates from different ethnic groups (other than White British) with the growth in ESOL qualifications contributing to this increase.



### Learners by Disability/Learning Difficulty/Health Problem

The College has comprehensive mechanisms to encourage learners to disclose any disability, learning difficulty or health problem. In 2016/17, the proportion of learners with a disability, learning difficulty or health problem appears to have declined but this is thought to be due to more comprehensive data collection.

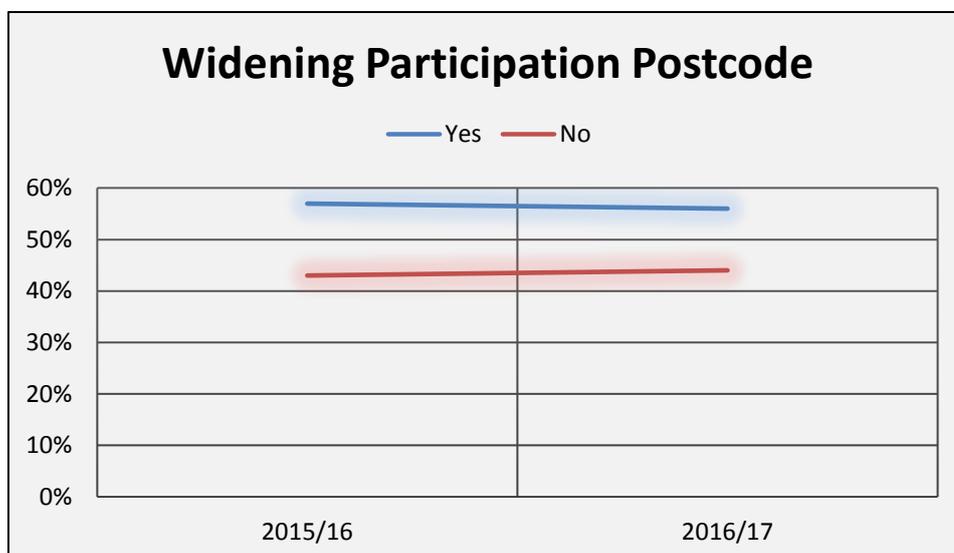


### Learners by Other Protected Characteristics

The College is reviewing enrolment procedures for 2018/19 and whether learners are asked to disclose information on sexuality, religion and belief, pregnancy/maternity and marriage/civil partnerships. Evidence from providers that do gather this data shows that high numbers of learners either choose not to put any response, or choose not to say in relation to these protected characteristics. If the College decides to collect this data, we will promote to learners the rationale for asking and how this information will be used.

### Learners by Widening Participation Postcodes

Deprivation due to social and economic hardship can be measured by postcode analysis and the data shows that the majority of our learners attend College from widening participation postcodes.

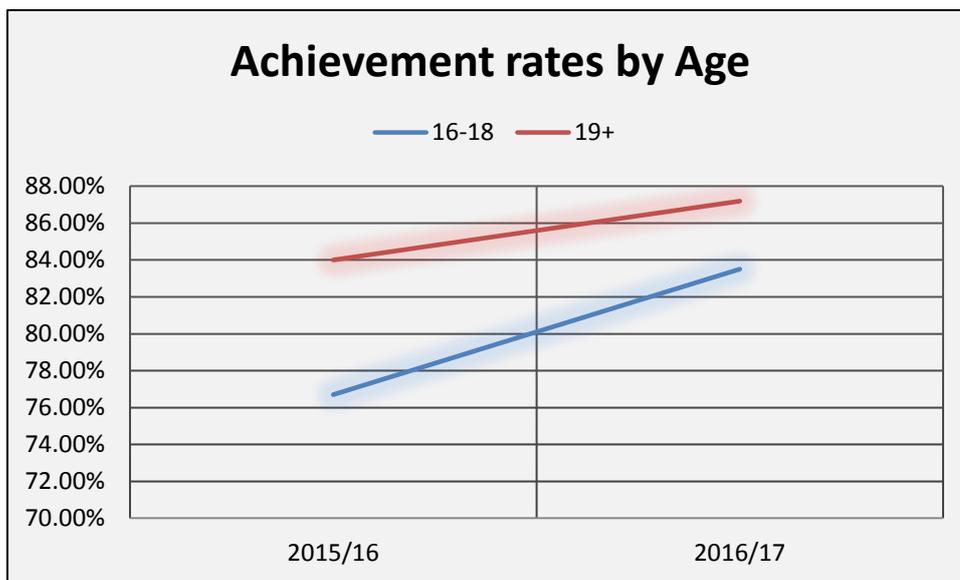


# Impact of the college experience on outcomes for learners

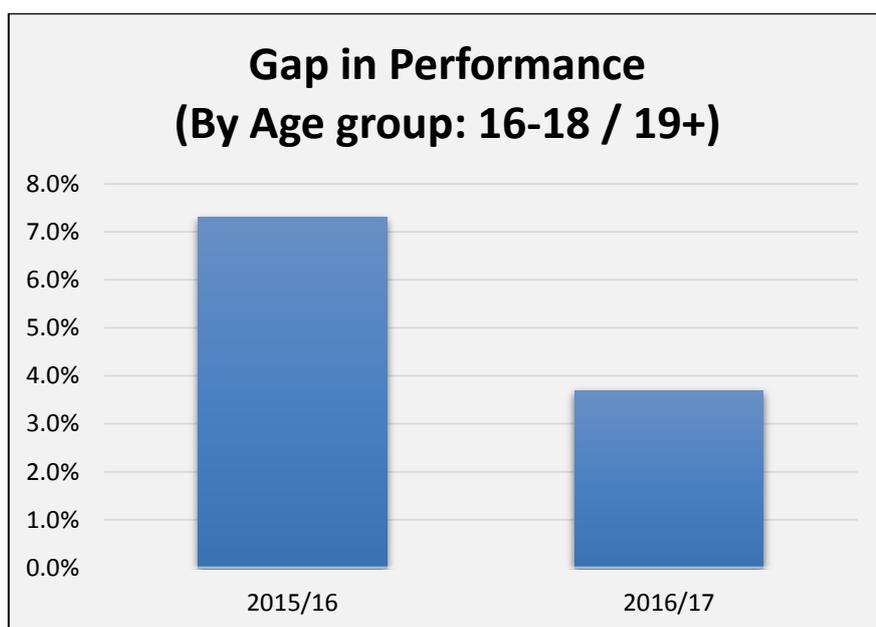
There was a significant improvement in achievement rates in 2016/17 with performance above national averages for both 16-18 year olds and adults. Achievement rates show the proportion of learners who completed their qualification (e.g. completed their course) and then passed their qualification. Achievement rates are broken down by protected characteristic to demonstrate performance between different groups of learners with an emphasis on closing the gap in achievement rates

## Success by Age Group

Achievement rates have improved for both age groups

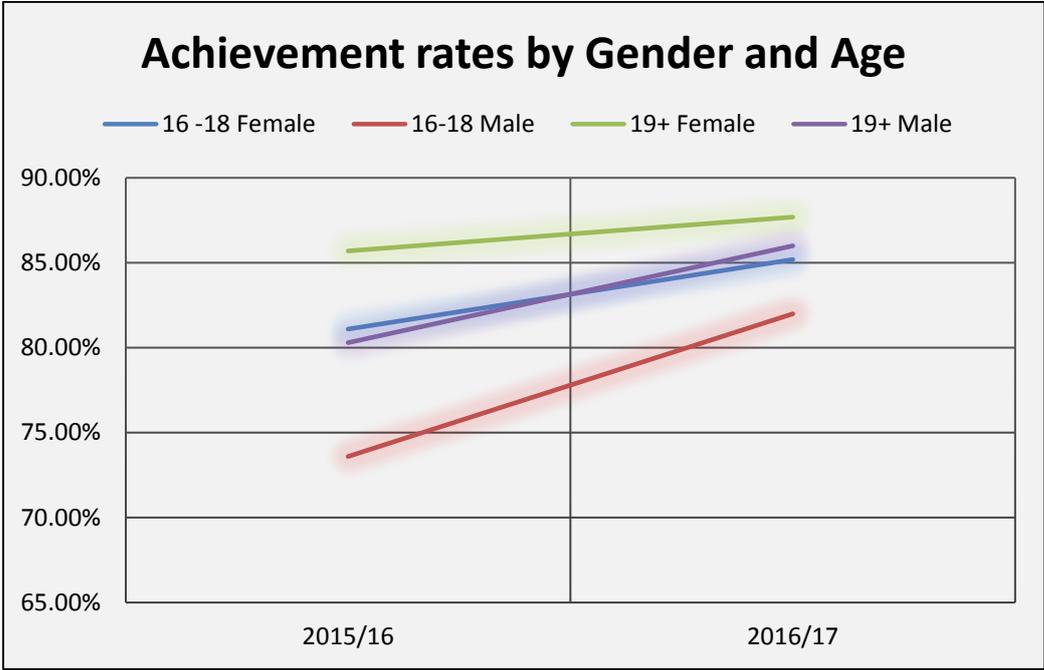


Although adults perform better than 16-18 learners nationally, there has been a narrowing of gap between adult learners and 16-18 learners

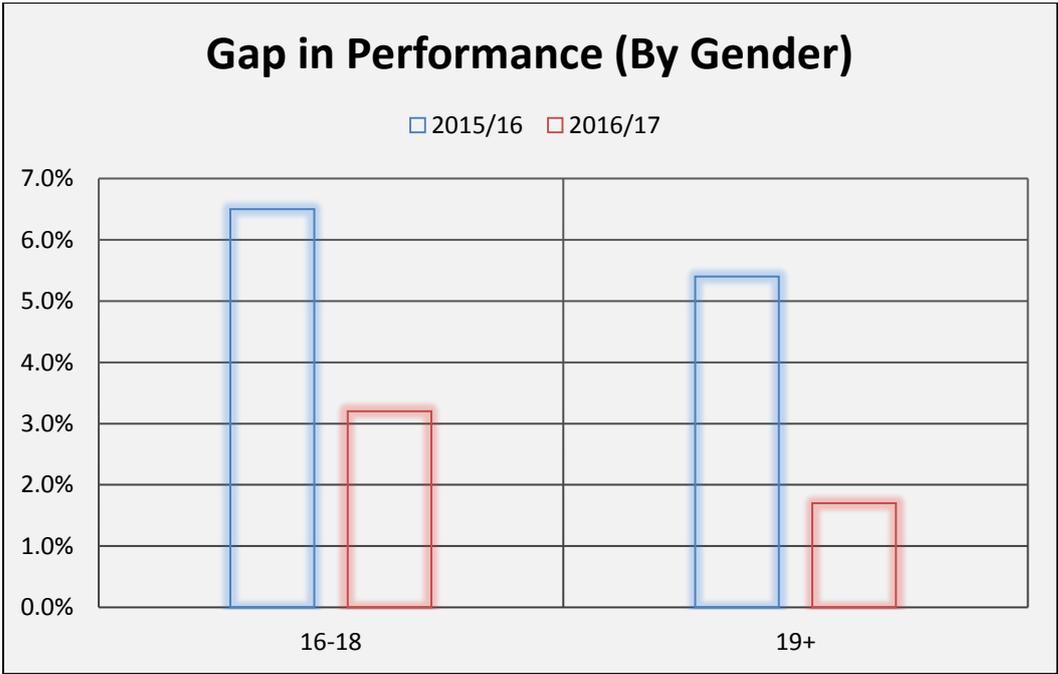


**Success by Gender**

Performance has improved for both males and females in 2016/17

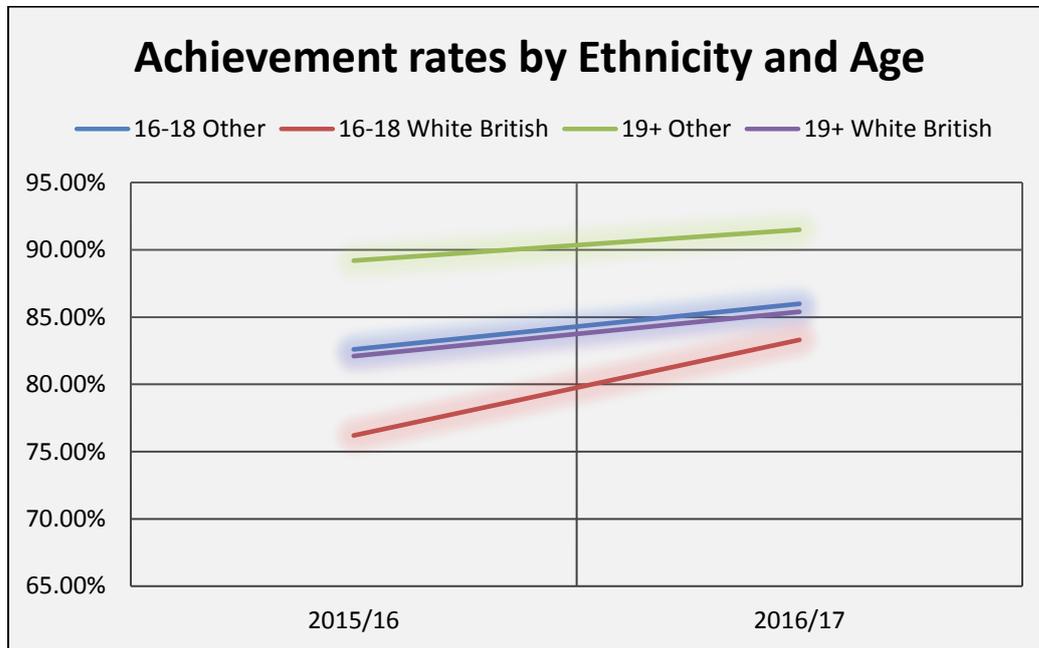


The gap between male and female learners has narrowed in 2016/17 for both 16-18 and 19+ learners

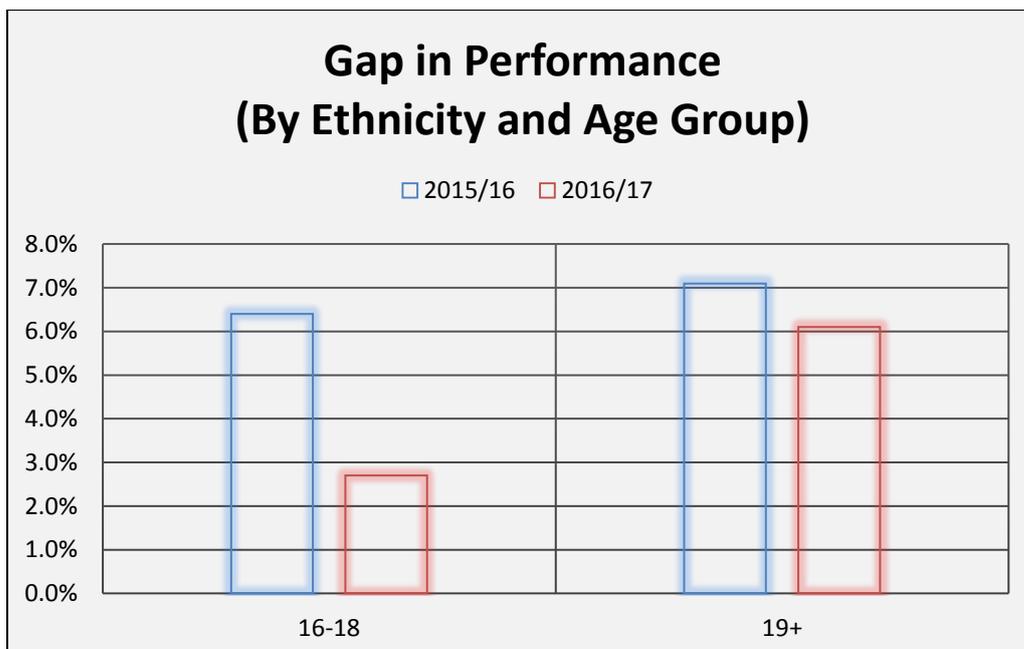


## Success by Ethnicity

Performance has improved for both White British learners and for learners from different ethnic backgrounds where Adult learners are performing particularly well with achievement rates of 91%

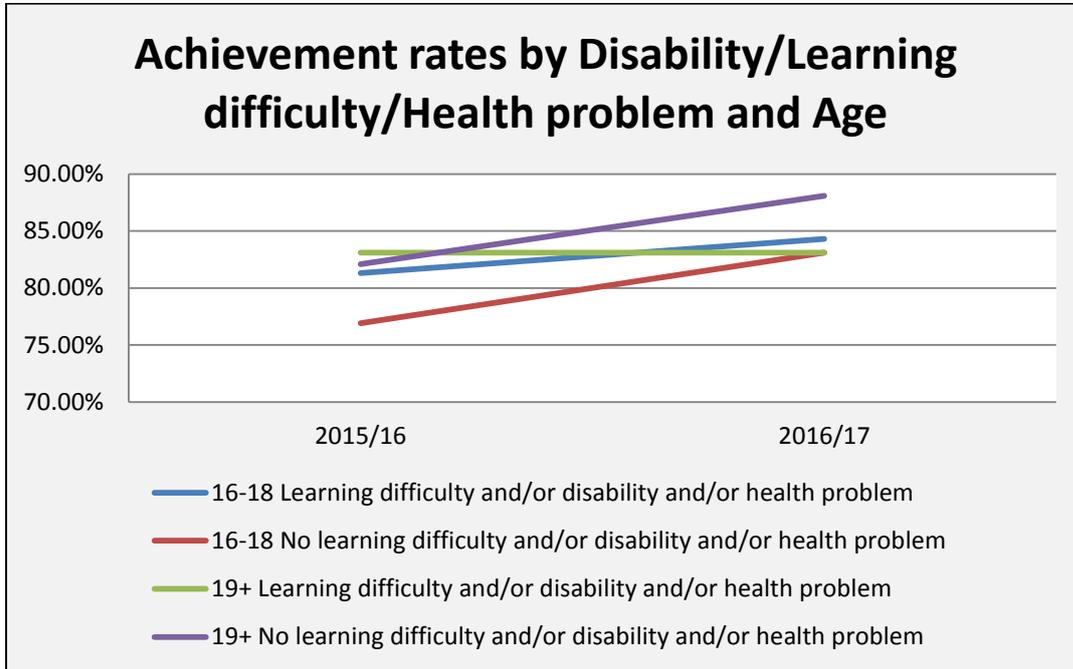


The gap in performance is narrowing between different ethnic groups for both 16-18 and 19+ learners with a significant improvement in achievement rates for 16-18 White British learners by 7% points in 2016/17.

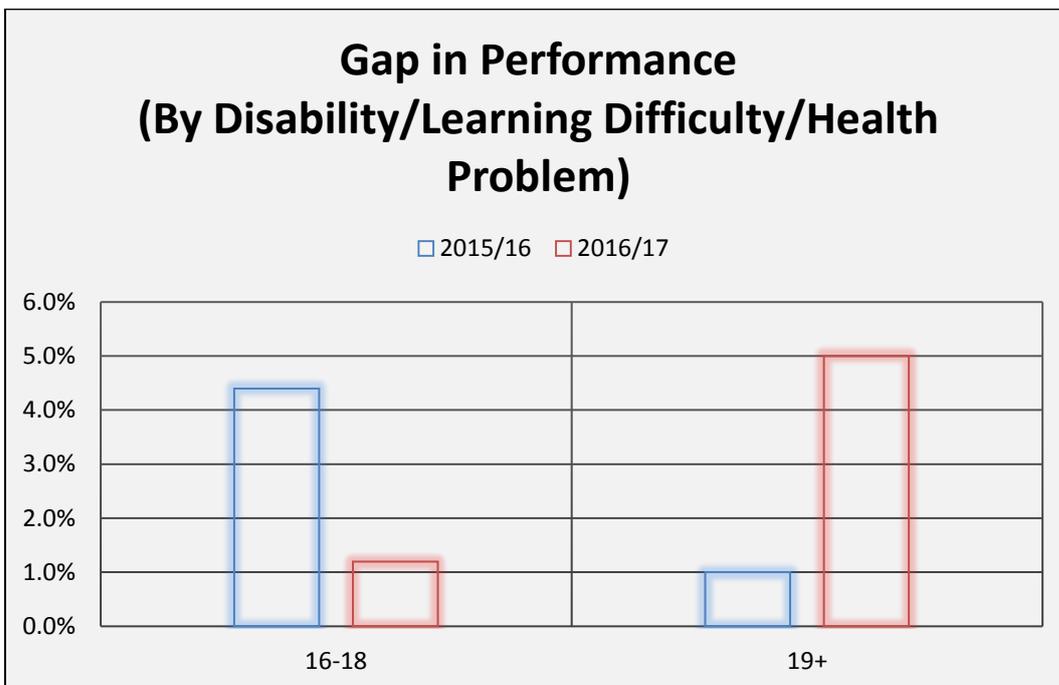


## Success by Disability/ Learning Difficulty

There has been a significant reduction in unknown outcomes in 2016/17 demonstrating much improved data collection. 16-18 learners with a Learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem continue to perform particularly well

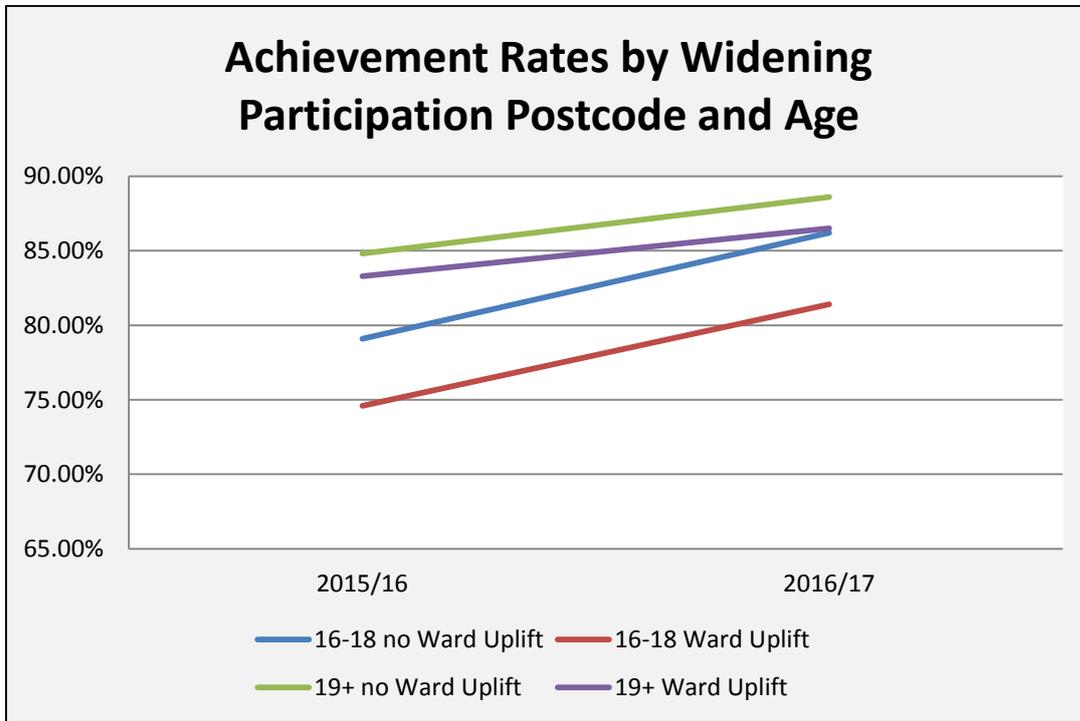


For 19+ learners, performance in 2016/17 is identical to the previous year but the gap in performance has widened to 5.0% points due to significant improvement in performance by learners who do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem.

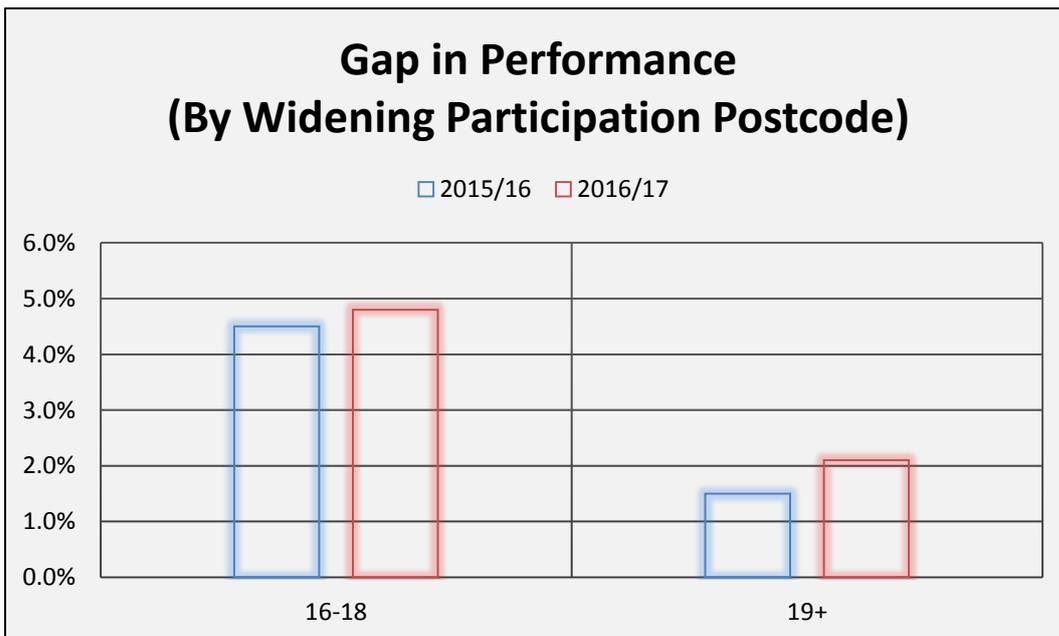


## Success by Widening Participation

Learners living in an area of social deprivation (Ward Uplift) have improved outcomes between 2015/16 and 2016/17 for both 16-18 and 19+ groups



The gap in performance for 16-18 year olds has increased slightly from 4.5% to 4.8% as a result of higher performance levels of learners in no uplift postcodes in 2016/17 and further strategies are in place to address this gap



## Success by learners receiving Additional Learning Support

Learners who require Additional Learning Support continue to perform well with the support provided helping them to achieve in line with learners that do not require such support. The following case study demonstrates the continuous high level of performance in this area

### Case Study - Jonny

Jonny joined the college in 2013 on a two year Level 3 Diploma in IT. Jonny has a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder, (ASD). Prior to joining the college, the Additional Learning Support Team worked closely with Jonny to help support his transition from school and prepare him for college life.

During the first year of his programme, Jonny had one to one support at all times to ensure he had understood verbal and written information and instructions and to help him manage his anxiety levels, which at times could be high due to the nature of his ASD difficulties. By working closely with Jonny around his anxieties, the Additional Support Team were able to significantly reduce the level of support Jonny received during the second year of his programme, enabling him to work far more independently.

In 2015, Jonny progressed to Higher Education at Wigan and Leigh College, successfully completing HND in IT 2017. During this time Jonny secured temporary employment as a Games Tester for Sony. He was offered a permanent position but turned this down to continue his studies with Wigan and Leigh. Jonny is currently enrolled on BSc (Hon) Computing Degree.

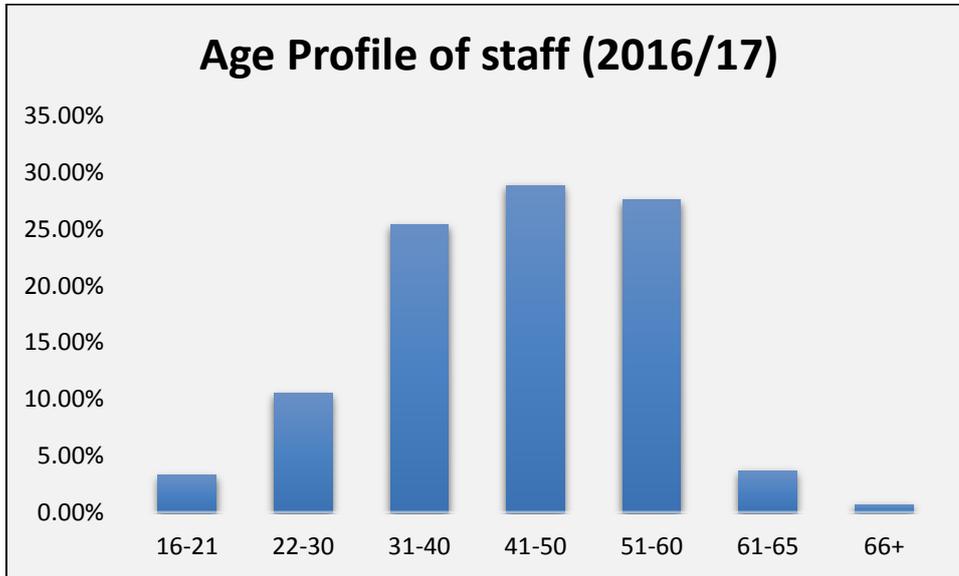
With appropriate support, Jonny has made incredible strides in his learning, developing both his academic and social skills. Jonny is now able to work largely independently and autonomously within a classroom setting. Jonny still accesses specialist ASD Mentoring outside of the classroom from the Additional Support Team to help him organise his workload, continue to develop his skills and ensure his anxiety levels remain low.

Jonny has enjoyed huge success during his time at Wigan and Leigh and hopes to complete a Master's Degree in Games Design in the future.

# Our Staff

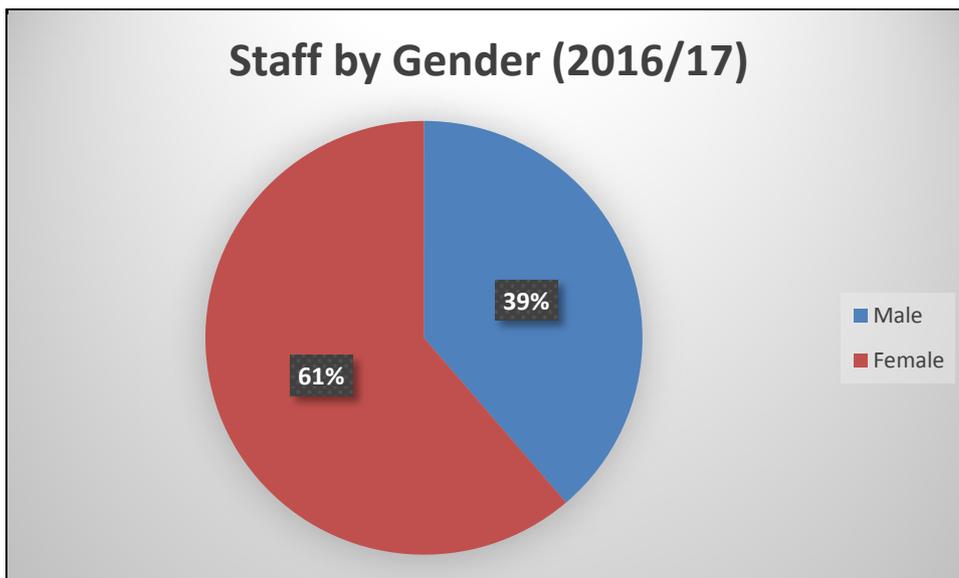
## Staff Age Profile

The College employed 457 staff at the end of the academic year 2016/17, including hourly paid staff. The age of Wigan and Leigh College staff ranges from 17 to 69 with the highest proportion of staff between 41-50 years



## Staff Gender Profile

We currently employ more females (280) than males (177) at Wigan and Leigh College.



Our workforce remains predominantly female. However, the gender profile for Wigan & Leigh College is slightly better than the FE sector average which is 64% female. We actively promote non-stereotypical gender recruitment in our internal and external recruitment adverts as we endeavour to challenge the stereotypical recruitment cycle.

### **Staff Disability Profile**

We currently have 31.9% staff who have not specified whether they have a disability. The percentage of staff who disclosed a disability during 2016/17 is 1.6%. However, due to the low numbers disclosing this information, slight changes to figures have a larger impact. We are seeking to understand why this may be the case. We have made increased efforts in 2016/17 to request and record this data from staff via survey activity rather than relying solely on return of paper based forms.

We continue to be a Disability Confident Employer in line with the new scheme and have worked with the scheme to ensure that we are compliant with their requirements. We prominently display and promote the Disability Confident symbol on our letterheads and corporate information and state that we particularly welcome applicants with a disability. We continue to work with Access to Work, Occupational Health and other specialist organisations to ensure the best support is provided. Free counselling support is also available. We can provide BSL Interpreters, large print, audio, colour contrasted or braille documentation both in the recruitment process and throughout staff time at College where it is required.

We ensure that all members of staff have the opportunity to develop and progress in their role. We monitor this through annual individual staff performance development reviews and staff satisfaction surveys.

We have delivered training to key managers in spotting the signs of mental ill health and we have a range of guidance documents to support managers and staff. These have included recent updates to ensure mental ill health is considered and supported. Reasonable adjustments are embedded in our policies and practice to ensure effective support for those with a disability, including mental ill health.

### **Staff Ethnicity Profile**

Wigan and Leigh College has a predominantly white British workforce (96.6%) but there are still staff who have not identified their ethnicity (29%). As with other criteria, steps are being taken to encourage a climate where staff feel able to disclose and identify their characteristics.

### **Staff Sexual Orientation Profile**

We currently have 82.5% staff who have not specified their sexual orientation. Efforts are currently being made to improve this data in the same way strategies are being explored for encouraging disability disclosure in order to create a climate where staff feel secure to disclose. Of the staff that have disclosed information, 4% have identified as LGBT.

### **Staff Religion/Belief Profile**

The majority of staff at the College have not specified their religion (83.8%). Of the staff that have disclosed information, 61% are Christian, 14% follow another religion and 18% have identified as having no religion, are atheist or agnostic. The College provides a chaplaincy service across all sites which are available to staff and learners. We continue to promote key religious dates and flexible working for prayer and religious celebrations. The College supports staff as much as possible to take leave for religious observance

## **Staff profile against other protected characteristics**

In relation to the following protected characteristics, disclosure is encouraged from initial application through to successful appointment. For current staff, we have introduced a new HR system that will enable individuals to input this information for themselves; this will work alongside a campaign to encourage staff to disclose personal data.

### **Staff Survey**

There were high levels of staff engagement and satisfaction reflected in the 76% return rate from the Staff Survey carried out in the summer of 2017. The Communication Strategy including all staff briefings continues to be successful and informative for staff with excellent feedback on a regular basis. In addition communication was identified as a positive through the Staff Survey with an 81% positive response rate in the communication category. The Staff Survey results for the College were above the benchmark results in all sections of the York College Survey group.

### **Gender Pay Reporting**

The gender pay gap is the difference between male and female earnings expressed as a percentage of male earnings. The College is required to calculate this in line with the published calculation method and report with the deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

The gender pay gap differs from equal pay.

Equal pay deals with the pay differences between men and women who carry out the same jobs, similar jobs or work of equal value. The College pays on a grade system for job types so equal pay for a role is offered to all successful candidates regardless of their gender.

The College will ensure that the publication deadline for March 2018 is met and monitor their Gender Pay gap information and benchmark across the sector. Strategies will be considered to reduce the gap where appropriate.

## **Our Next Steps – Equality Objectives for 2017/18**

Although the College has made progress against each of the 2016/17 Equality Objectives, there is still further work to be completed in relation to the following two objectives:

- 1 Reinforce the importance of disclosing personal information such as specific learning difficulties/disabilities, sexual orientation, and ethnicity by promoting how this information is used to drive equality forward and foster good relations.
- 2 Actively promote non-stereotypical recruitment and support attainment

A further two objectives have been included for 2017/18:

- 3 To further enhance learner voice pathways and support mechanisms for minority groups of learners
- 4 To raise aspirations and narrow achievement gaps for learners from Widening Participation postcodes and disadvantaged backgrounds

## Equality and Diversity in the news

Here are just a few of the stories we have captured which show the range of activity taking place at the College to foster good relations, drive equality forward and to celebrate diversity.

Ahead of the General Election, Wigan & Leigh College learners held a range of activities to celebrate living in a democracy.



Suffragette sashes were worn by Floristry and A Level learners and staff to commemorate the women who fought for the right to vote and the College is already starting to raise awareness that next year will mark the centenary of when the act was passed. Floristry learners created rose buttonholes to celebrate the Suffragettes and learners and staff made donations to the Mayor's Homelessness Fund.

Grayson Perry's, 'Divided Britain', was shown in the theatre which is a documentary where the filmmaker sets out to make two artworks reflecting the two sides of the Brexit debate and starter activities and themed projects took place in sessions as arranged by departments.

The learners wanted it to be a fun event to celebrate as a community and to raise awareness that other parts of the world don't have the same privileges. Learners managed to raise £214, all of which will go to the Mayor's Homelessness Fund

# Fifth annual dragon challenge

A TEAM of students from Edge Hill University took part in the fifth annual North West Confucius Institute Dragon Boat Race at Helly Hansen Watersports Centre, Salford Quays, on Saturday, May 6.

The event - hosted by the University of Manchester - saw six dragon boat teams from universities across the North West,

including UCLAN, Liverpool, Lancaster, and Wigan & Leigh College's Confucius Classroom, battle it out on the water to scoop the coveted title.

The race comprised of 18 students from each university racing against each other to become the North West 2017 Champions.

The event celebrates the traditional Chinese

Dragon Boat Festival and in keeping with tradition, the large wooden boats are adorned with decorative Chinese dragon heads and tails.

As well as pairs of paddlers, there is always a drummer on the boat and the pulsation of the drumbeats are considered to be the heartbeat of the dragon boat.



● The Dragon Boat racing students from Edge Hill at the event

# Back to the steam age

Vickie Warrington is in her final year of studying mechanical engineering at Wigan and Leigh College. She hopes to secure an apprenticeship and continue her studies while gaining experience in the industry.

Warrington tells *PE* about her hobby maintaining a 108-year-old traction engine.

## How did you get into this hobby?

I first got into the hobby nearly 10 years ago when I was 17 years old. I knew that my next-door neighbour had owned two traction engines for some time, but had no idea what they were or how they worked. One day my curiosity got the better of me and I decided to pop in to see what these 'traction engine things' were.

I was hooked after one visit and began to spend as much time as I could learning about the engines and how to look after them. As the years went on, I met my partner through the hobby, and became interested in the engineering side of it.

When I tell people that my hobby involves looking after and driving a 108-year-old, 10-tonne traction engine, I get so many different responses. I get so many questions, but lots of people are intrigued as to how a 5ft 3in girl became involved with these huge machines.

## What does it involve?

During the summer months, we take the engine to various shows and steam rallies all over the country. If it's local, we drive the engine on the road. But at a top speed of 5mph you're not getting there in a hurry.

For a lot of traction engine owners, winter tends to be the time for any maintenance work. In our case it has been the time to completely strip down the engine to fit a new boiler and carry out a mechanical overhaul. Thankfully my partner and I enjoy doing the mechanical



parts and we have some good friends who are skilled in boiler work.

## How regularly do you do it?

At the moment we're completely overhauling our own Burrell traction engine. So pretty much every day there is something going on in our small workshop at home. My partner is doing most of the mechanical overhaul, but I love to go into the workshop and do machining and fitting jobs with him.

## Why do you enjoy it?

There are so many aspects of the hobby which I enjoy. I absolutely love the engineering part. It is great to make new component parts that you can no longer buy off the shelf and bring something back to life that would otherwise be consigned to the scrapyards. It gives me a great sense of pride. Also, how often in

everyday life do you get to drive a machine which is more than 100 years old?

The social side of the hobby is also great. You get to meet a variety of people from all walks of life, and everyone has skills which they pass on to each other. It's a real community and you can tell that each and every one of them has an absolute passion for their hobby. I also love that our four-year-old daughter can get involved.

## Has your hobby helped your career?

Looking after the traction engine has definitely helped me in my studies. I feel that having the opportunity to be involved with this has given me the skills to be able to solve problems in a practical manner. I also think that it has taught me to persevere with something when it doesn't go quite to plan.

## Do you have an interesting hobby?

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# Inspirational engineers

BY CHARLES GRAHAM  
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**Wigan and Leigh College has been raising the profile and celebrating the achievements of women in a traditionally male-dominated sector.**

Inspirational female engineers there were making it their mission to encourage more of their gender to join the industry in which currently a massive 93 per cent of the engineering workforce is male.

Georgia Webb, a former student of Fred Longworth High School, was one of those backing International Women in Engineering Day and wants to help change perceptions that engineering is a career for men and that it is a profession where you get your hands dirty.

She said: "I chose to study Electrical Engineering because engineers are scientists. Engineering affects every part of our lives which I why chose it as a career - to make a difference."

At Wigan and Leigh College, female engineers can choose from different study options including full-time courses, apprenticeships, Higher National qualifications, degrees or degree apprenticeships.

The college has close links with some of the biggest names in engineering such as Sellafield, MBDA, Electricity North West and National



Wigan and Leigh college students Alice Martindale, Sareh Fadaei, Charlotte Swift

Nuclear Ltd and students use first class facilities and the latest innovative technologies to learn computer aided design, 3D printing and modelling, software design and manufacturing applications.

Lucinda Jones, a former pupil of St Peter's High School said: "As part of my apprenticeship with MBDA, I am studying a HND in Electrical Engineering which is equivalent to doing two years at university and I am enjoying earning while I learn."

During their time at Wigan and Leigh College, these aspiring engineers have had the opportunity to meet female guest speakers and listen to them present the high earning potential, the large amount of job opportunities in Wigan and Greater Manchester, and how companies are highly investing in female engineers.

Phil Collier, college head of engineering said: "The number of women choosing engineering as their career pathway is increasing.

"This year we have a record number of females enrolled onto Engineering courses and apprenticeships at our Centre for Engineering."

College principal Anna Dawe said: "I am delighted to see more females choosing STEM (Science Technology, Engineering, Maths) careers. At Wigan and Leigh College we are working closely with the young women to inspire, support and enhance their professional development."



## Borough's students transported to the Far East

Wiganers were transported to the other side of the world with a spectacular Chinese celebration to mark the country's national day.

The Confucius Classroom, based at Wigan and Leigh College, put on the packed programme of arts and culture at the Pier Centre for an event which also marked its 12th anniversary. The Confucius team put on performances of traditional Chi-

nese music, Tai Chi and sword displays.

Students from Wigan and Leigh College, Mab's Cross Primary School and Shevington High School all attended along with the Mayor of Wigan Coun Ron Conway and the council's deputy leader Coun David Molyneux.

The Confucius Classroom gives people the opportunities to learn Mandarin, and discover China's culture and traditions.