

## SFC Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2019

### Purpose

- To update the Board on progress towards our published Equality Outcomes for the period 2017-2021.

### Background

- SFC's internal and external Equality Outcomes were developed in line with the expectations of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. This report summarises progress since June 2018.
- We published a Public Sector Duty Equality Mainstreaming Report update in April 2019.
- There is good progress across all external Equality Outcomes. That said, we do not currently publish data on all protected characteristics (particularly in relation to LGBT characteristics where there is evidence of higher dropout rates), and there have been delays with the process of approving and publishing of Equality Impact Assessments.
- Our progress across all internal Equality Outcomes is not consistent. We need to improve Black and Minority Ethnic representation within our organisation and to improve the collection of internal employee data.
- We want to make sure that our next set of equality objectives supports SFC and the institutions that we fund to make demonstrable progress in tackling persistent inequalities. We have been working closely with the EHRC over the course of 2019 and we have developed a Memorandum of Understanding with them. Additionally, we have refocused the equalities work stream that we have commissioned Advance HE to deliver on our behalf. The new Advance HE work plan will better support SFC to influence and measure change related to our ambitions for gender, race, disability and other protected characteristics.

## **Recommendations**

- The Board is invited to note the progress to date against the SFC's equality outcomes and the emerging strategic alliance with the EHRC.

## **Financial implications**

- There are no new financial recommendations resulting from this paper.

## SFC Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2018

### **Purpose**

1. To update the Board on progress towards our published Equality Outcomes for the period 2017-2021.

### **Background**

2. On 30 April 2019, we published our Mainstreaming and Equality Outcome Report for the period 2017-19. This report set out the progress we had made to date against our equality outcomes. The report also set out how SFC seeks to mainstream equality across all aspects of our work. The report is available on our website and a direct link is available [here](#).
3. The SFC's Equality Outcomes (EOs) aim to remove or minimise disadvantages associated with protected characteristics that might be experienced by students and staff in our institutions or by SFC staff. There are five external EOs and two internal EOs. These are:

#### External Equality Outcomes to support SFC-funded institutions:

- i. To achieve more even patterns – at both a sectoral and an institutional level - of participation, retention and success by different groups of learners, from protected characteristic groups and including those from areas of deprivation and care backgrounds where they interact.
- ii. Understand the diversity of college staff, management and governing bodies leading to specific recommendations and guidance for colleges in AY 2019/20.
- iii. Support the university sector to achieve a diverse and representative workforce.
- iv. To achieve an improved and aligned evidence base for equality, informed by increased rates of disclosure across protected characteristics.
- v. Equality and diversity considerations are evident in outcome agreements and across all core and strategic funding agreements.

#### Internal Equality Outcomes to support SFC staff:

- i. We will better understand and improve equality and diversity within our workforce through improved disclosure and positive action and development initiatives.

- ii. Equality and diversity responsibilities will be clearly established in our strategic and operational planning and advanced through forward job plans and evaluation processes.

### **Monitoring progress on the published Equality Outcomes**

4. Until September 2019 these outcomes and our work to embed equality were overseen by an internal Equality and Diversity Group (EDG) chaired by John Kemp, Director, Access, Learning and Outcomes.
5. As a result of an increased focus on our equality work and an emerging strategic alliance with the EHRC, we are now considering the most appropriate way to steer our equality work. As such, the remit and membership of the EDG is under review.
6. We are required to publish our next mainstreaming report by no later than 30 April 2021. The EDG group agreed, following the publication of the PSED Mainstreaming Report in 2019, that SFC will demonstrate compliance by publishing relevant equality data (staffing profile information) on an annual basis. Furthermore progress against our equality outcomes will also be updated annually. This change in approach is designed to ensure compliance, raise awareness of our approach to mainstreaming equality and to reduce the bureaucratic burden associated with PSED compliance.
7. SFC is now working with the EHRC to identify persistent inequalities in the College and University sectors and this work will inform new equality outcomes for the SFC to be set by April 2021.
8. The rest of this report provides an overview of our progress on each of our published Equality Outcomes.

### **External Equality Outcome update**

9. Overall, there is good progress across all external Equality Outcomes. Two key issues emerge from this review:
  - We do not currently publish data on all protected characteristics (particularly in relation to LGBT where there is evidence of lower retention rates).
  - In some circumstances we are not able to publish data related to specific racial groups or specific disability types.
10. The protected characteristic groups in the Equality Act (Scotland) are:
  - Age
  - Disability

- Gender reassignment (the SFC uses the term trans)
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex (the SFC uses the term gender)
- Sexual orientation

11. SFC has made a commitment to ensure that the experiences of people who are care experienced are not adversely affected; therefore we treat care experience in a similar way to the legally defined protected characteristics. We take a similar approach to socio-economic status.

***Equality Outcome i – To achieve more even patterns of participation, retention and success from protected characteristic groups***

12. The *SFC Report on Widening Access 2017-2018* was published on 29 May 2019. This is the third SFC report on widening access. The report presents data in two ways: firstly, data specifically relating to the Scottish Government’s access targets; and secondly, further access data that is more in line with SFC Outcome Agreement measures. These focus on socio-economic status and protected characteristics such as gender, disability and race.

13. We will continue to develop the report, with possible future additions including data on subject choice and on graduate outcomes and destinations, and more extensive data included within the background tables. Specifically, we intend to be able to include more data about the profile of Scottish domiciled students with reference to specific ethnicities and specific disability types.

14. The key points from the May 2019 report are:

- The number of Scottish domiciled full-time first degree entrants to Scottish universities from the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland increased from 13.8% in 2016/17 to 15.6% in 2017/18.
- The number of students with care experience backgrounds across universities and colleges in Scotland increased from 2,070 in 2016/2017 to 2,545 in 2017/2018.
- Students with care experience backgrounds accounted for 0.8% of entrants at full-time first degree level. Scottish Government statistics<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-social-work-statistics-2017-2018/>

suggest that 2% of children in Scotland are 'looked after' or on the child protection register.

### **Student profile by protected characteristic and SIMD quintile<sup>2</sup>**

- The age profile of Scottish domiciled students varies within SIMD categories as does the disability, ethnicity and gender profile.
- The majority of full-time first-degree entrants are aged 16-19, followed by those aged 20-24 and then aged 25 and above. There are a small number of entrants in this group who are aged 15 and under.
- The majority of entrants to first degrees aged 16-19 are from SIMD80-100 areas. The reverse is the case for those who are aged 25+ with the majority of entrants from this age group residing in SIMD 0-20 areas. This suggests that a positive impact of widening access policies is that mature students aged 25+ living in SIMD 0-20 areas are pursuing degree level study.
- The number of Scottish domiciled entrants to full-time first degrees who have declared a disability has increased from 2,870 in 2013-14 to 3,865 in 2017-18. Our data suggests that students from SIMD80-100 are more likely to declare a disability.
- In 2017-2018 of the 303,113 enrolments at Scottish colleges, 21,110 (7%) identified as BME; and 264,574(87.3%) identified as belonging to the white ethnicity category (this includes white Scottish, white European, white rest of the UK, white other and Gypsy/Traveller). There were 17,429 enrolled students whose ethnicity is unknown or not declared.
- In 2017-18 of the 36,530 Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants at Scottish universities, 2,785 identified as belonging to one of the ethnic groups within the BME category; 33,162 identified as belonging to the 'white' category; and information is not held for 583 students.
- Within our colleges 154,679(51%) enrolments in 2017-18 were female, 147,648(48.7%) were male and 786(0.3%) are classed as 'other' or refused the information.

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<sup>2</sup> Data presented in this section is sourced from SFC data held on Qlikview(University Undergraduate entrants) and INFact (College enrolments)

- Within our universities, 21,714(59.4%) Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants in 2017-2018 are female; 14,789 (40.5%) are male; and 27 are recorded as 'other'.
15. The attached annex provides an overview of our policy work to support Equality Outcome 1. A key issue is our continued lack of reporting and policy work in relation to LGBT. We are aware that an initial analysis of the data outlines a higher drop-out rate in this sector and this is confirmed by a survey undertaken by LGBT Youth Scotland. We are increasing our efforts to consider all protected characteristics and this is supported by a repositioning of the work plan that we fund Advance HE to take forward and our strengthened relationship with the EHRC.
  16. **Assessment of progress:** We are on track to deliver this EO as it currently stands. However, we are aware that our policy work and statistical reporting does not cover all protected characteristics and we need to improve this position. Accordingly, we are working with the EHRC to examine the available data so that we can set ambitious, measureable equality outcomes that support equality of opportunity for students.

***Equality Outcome ii - Understand the diversity of college staff, management and governing bodies leading to specific recommendations and guidance for colleges in AY 2019-20***

17. Listed below are two publications that have advanced this equality outcome.
  - SFC published College Staffing Data 2017-18 (SFC Statistical Publication), March 2019
  - Advance HE published College staffing data collection guidance, March 2018 (work funded by SFC)
18. The SFC publication outlines key issues including a 1% reduction in the number of full-time staff with recognised teaching qualifications and a decline in the already low numbers of black and minority ethnic staff. The SFC publication highlights that black and minority ethnic staff account for only 2.1% of the national college workforce. Based on the demographic profile of Scotland, and the more diverse demographic profile of central belt urban areas we would expect this figure to reflect or exceed the national statistic of a black and minority ethnic population accounting for 4% of the population.
19. With regard to gender, 61% of the college workforce are female. This figure

includes academic and support and professional staff and remains unchanged from the previous year. Within academic grades the profile is more balanced; the 2017-2018 college staffing data highlighted that 54% of teaching staff are female and 46% are male.

20. The Advanced HE research publication funded by SFC – [Equality in Colleges in Scotland: results from the 2017 staff survey and focus groups](#) was published on 15 May 2018. The results of this survey identified different experiences of staff sharing different protected characteristics. SFC has supported colleges to respond to the findings of this survey and Advance HE will be running a further survey in 2020.
21. **Assessment of progress:** As a result of the prior work undertaken to develop this guidance and ongoing work with colleges there has been an improvement in employee data capture within colleges. We are continuing to fund Advance HE until July 2021 and this funding is supporting ongoing support for college data teams and the delivery of a further staff survey. Further, the work we are undertaking in collaboration with the EHRC will underpin future guidance to the college sector.

***Equality Outcome iii - Support the university sector to achieve a diverse and representative workforce***

22. We have now established robust baseline data relating to the profile of staff at HEIs. Analysis of staffing data for the period 2017/2018 highlighted the following key points:-
  - There is a higher proportion of males in academic roles at Scottish HEIs (55.0%), especially at professorial level (75.4%)
  - Whereas females are more prevalent in professional and support roles (63.3%)
  - Female staff are underrepresented in some academic subject areas, for example engineering and technology (20.9%), whilst males are most underrepresented in education (39.7%)
  - A smaller proportion of female academic staff are in salary bands at £45,563 and over (41.8%), compared to male colleagues (52.6%);
23. The majority of academic staff working at Scottish universities in 2017-2018 had a white ethnic background (86.1) and 13.9% were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.
24. At senior academic levels 92% of professors had a white ethnic background compared to 8.0% of professors who identified as black or minority ethnic.

25. Further, 42.6% of black and minority ethnic staff in academic posts are employed on fixed-term contracts. This compares to a lower proportion (25.3%) of academic staff who identify as belonging to a white ethnic grouping on fixed-terms contracts. Further analysis is required by universities to understand the reasons for this difference.
26. 3.0% of HEI staff declared a disability in 2017-18, and the most frequently declared disability was a long standing illness or health condition (25.2%).
27. The development of a comprehensive baseline regarding the demography of staff working in the HE sector will enable SFC to undertake longitudinal analysis of staff profiles and trends that are in line with HESA analysis. This activity supports the delivery of Aim 14 of the SFC Gender Action Plan.
28. We have commissioned Advance HE to develop a positive action recruitment model to support colleges and universities take steps to diversify recruitment panels in an attempt to improve outcomes for black and minority ethnic candidates. This work builds on previous training delivered by Advance HE to governing body members and key staff working in governance and equality and diversity in Scottish HEIs and colleges.
29. The HESA Staff record from 2017-18 onwards has captured information regarding the demography of Governors of Scottish universities. The 2017-18 data highlighted that 53.7% of Governors are male, 45.2% are female and 1% of governors expressed their gender as 'other'. With regard to ethnicity we do not have a complete picture as 24% of Governors did not disclose their ethnicity. We do however know that from the data available 71.6% of Governors identify from categories that make up the 'white' ethnicity category and 4.4% of Governors identify as being from another ethnic background. SFC will continue to monitor this data so that SFC can undertake longitudinal analysis that will inform future approaches to improving the representation of protected characteristic groups on HEI Governing bodies.
30. In terms of promoting and supporting career development, we continue to assess final Outcome Agreement submissions (and work with Advance HE) to ensure the delivery of Athena SWAN and HR Excellence in Research aims are sufficiently ambitious and monitor delivery against these aims going forward.
31. **Assessment of progress:** We have made good progress against this Equality Outcome and will continue to monitor the data and push institutions to take actions to ensure that the HE workforce enjoys equality of opportunity. We will work with the EHRC to examine the available data so that we can set a more specific Equality Outcome for the new reporting period starting in April 2021 if the data continues to show disparity in outcomes by specific protected characteristics.

***Equality Outcome iv- To achieve an improved and aligned evidence base for equality, informed by increased rates of disclosure across protected characteristics***

32. From 2019-20 onwards the college dataset will collect data on all protected characteristics, which is a significant step forward. The latest [college guidance \(FES\) for student data collections in 2019-20](#) incorporates best practice guidance, all protected characteristics and the inclusion of other additional special interest groups such as; British Sign Language, estranged person, stateless person and veterans.
33. The Advance HE research publication (as referenced above in para. 17) has specific college staffing recommendations focused on improving data quality and disclosure rates across protected characteristics.
34. **Assessment of progress:** This equality outcome is on track and improvements have been made year on year. It is a very positive step to include all protected characteristics in the college student data collection. The improved quantity and quality of data held will support the activity we plan to take in partnership with the EHRC to identify priority areas for action.

***Equality Outcome v - Equality and diversity considerations are evident in outcome agreements and across all core and strategic funding agreements.***

35. All requests to the SFC for funding continue to require an Equality Impact Assessment. This is assessed by a policy lead and is referred to those making the decision to approve or decline funding.
36. The SFC funded Advance HE to take forward work with colleges and universities to improve the quality of equality impact assessment supporting strategic decision making. An online resource tool has been developed and this has been welcomed by the sector.
37. The SFC no longer requires institutions/regions to submit an overarching equality impact assessment to accompany their OA's. However, the SFC does expect institutions to equality impact assess the policies or practices in place to deliver the required outcomes. The EHRC will be delivering training to SFC staff to ensure we are equipped to assess the quality of impact assessments.
38. Internally, we have conducted a review of our equality impact assessment process and have concluded that there is a genuine commitment to the principle of equality impact assessment and a real desire to do equality impact assessment well. However, we recognise that there are still difficulties in conducting equality impact assessments properly and in a consistent manner.
39. To improve the quality and consistency of equality impact assessments we have been trialling different approaches to impact assessment and working to

improve the evidence base that policy officials can access. The EIA for the Mental Health Counsellors was informed by research that demonstrated different needs related to gender, race and sexual orientation and these findings resulted in a change of direction to the policy and highlighted the need for SFC to monitor the impact of the provision of mental health counsellors on different groups.

40. **Assessment of progress:** We consider there has been good progress on this outcome but we should not become complacent. The development of the Memorandum of Understanding with the EHRC will further support our efforts to embed equality in every aspect of our decision making.

#### **Internal Equality Outcome update**

41. We continue to make progress on both internal Equality Outcomes. It is also worth noting that our 2019-20 internal audit report on equality and diversity concluded that SFC demonstrates compliance in relation to its obligations under the Equality Act and identified a range of good practice.

#### ***Internal Outcome i: We will better understand and improve equality and diversity within our workforce through improved disclosure and positive action and development initiatives***

42. This is being progressed by our HR department in relation to our staff cohort and is reported to our internal EDG. Key issues for the SFC include:

- Continuing to encourage applications from BME groups and seeking to break down any barriers to those progressing through to shortlisting and appointment.
- Continuing to improve the quality of data collection: we had previously identified a high proportion of “not disclosed” responses, both from applicants and current employees, and have put steps in place to improve this.

43. Key achievements include:

- Significant improvement in the proportion of job applicants returning equalities data: achieved through changes in administrative processes.
- The ongoing participation of female staff in the [Aurora](#) female leadership programme, and steps being taken to extend the learnings from Aurora to other staff and to the organisation as a whole.
- Staff engagement activities to promote and support equality days. In the past year this has included Purple Friday (LGBT), Mental Health Week and

menopause awareness activities.

- Awareness training in unconscious bias to those who are new to recruitment.
- Refresher training for the Senior Management Team on employers' duties under the Equalities Act.

44. In the coming year we will:

- Continue to explore ways to improve BME representation in our workforce.
- Through the induction process, support and encourage new starts to complete their diversity monitoring data to improve the quality of our data. (For benchmark purposes this stands at 77% in Nov 2019.)
- Review and refresh our equality monitoring data fields to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
- Provide training and awareness-raising on mental health and wellbeing, seeking ways to engage all staff.
- Provide training in unconscious bias and recruitment.
- Continue to support participation of female staff in the Aurora programme.

45. Key achievements include:

- The roll out of [Aurora](#) to female staff, this is a female only leadership development programme, and steps being taken at SMT level to support an appropriate "legacy" for Aurora work.
- The launch of a series of Diversity Blogs to raise awareness of ED&I in and across the FE & HE sector in Scotland.
- The active partnership with the EHRC and the joint hosting of an event to discuss the findings of the EHRC Inquiry into racial harassment in publicly funded universities.

46. Going forward we will:

- Work with the EHRC to deliver training to the SFC board and SFC staff members to ensure that our work considers the Equality Act (2010) and the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

***Internal equality outcome ii: Equality and diversity responsibilities will be clearly established in our strategic and operational planning and advanced through forward job plans (FJPs) and evaluation processes***

47. There is currently a strong equality presence in our Strategic Framework and Operating Plan, both of which state SFC's strong commitment to placing equality, diversity and good relations at the heart of the organisation. Guidance is provided to help ensure that, where members of staff have specific Equality Outcome responsibilities, those duties are reflected appropriately in their forward job plans and ongoing review discussions.
48. Going forward we will continue to support a strong equality presence in both the Strategic Framework and annual Operating Plans.

**Risk assessment**

49. The internal SFC Equality and Diversity Group was established to oversee the progress of the published EOs and ensure they are delivered in full. We are now working with the EHRC and considering new governance arrangements for equalities activity within SFC, as such equality is a priority area and the risk of not progressing against the equality outcomes is currently low.

**Equality and diversity assessment**

50. This is outlined in our progress on each EO.

**Financial implications**

51. There are no financial recommendations resulting from this paper.

**Recommendations**

52. The Board is invited to note the progress to date on SFC's published Equality Outcomes 2017-2021.

**Publication**

53. This paper will be published on the Council website.

**Further information**

54. Contact: Linda McLeod, tel: 0131 313 6694, email: [lmcleod@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:lmcleod@sfc.ac.uk)



## **Annex A: Policy work by protected characteristic to support Equality Outcome 1**

### ***Age***

- We continue to work with the sector to progress and support equality in relation to age. This includes the OA process requiring targets on age intake, retention (universities) and successful completions for FTFE 16-19 year olds (colleges)
- We are developing a School Engagement Framework (SEF) to support the COWA recommendations. The Framework is being developed jointly with schools (including pupils and staff), local authorities, SFC-funded school initiatives (such as Access to High Demand Professions, Schools for Higher Education Programme) and other key stakeholders. It will focus on pupils – not schools or types of schools – and will seek to achieve early intervention and a collaborative, holistic approach to supporting school pupils. AHDP and SHEP will use the framework as the basis on which to build future funding bids and programme delivery, tying in with the proposed expansion into all schools from AY2019/20. Better partnership working with SDS will also ensure less duplication of materials and resources.
- SFC continues to fund SWAP for the provision of access to HE courses across Scotland, including expansion of the programme in the North of Scotland with RGU, NESCol and the developing links with UHI. The focus of SWAP is primarily on adult learners but they do support all learners who have been out of education for a prolonged period of time. SWAP has also been working with FOCUS West (the West regionally funded SHEP group) on a community-learning project in order to access families and parents who have been out of education, this activity, funded by SFC, supports COWA recommendation 15.

### ***Disability***

- All institutions have reported on the intake, retention (universities) and success rates of students (colleges) in their Outcome Agreements. All colleges have developed an access and inclusion strategy that also details the intake, success and destinations by disability group.
- We continue to work with the Scottish Government to implement its Disability Delivery Plan and more recently the 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: employment action plan'
- We set up the Disabled Students Outcomes Group, chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of Lead Scotland and supported by Scottish Government. Supported by SFC funding, Lead Scotland and Advance HE are currently conducting research to establish the current range of practices and initiatives taking place at colleges and universities across Scotland that support disabled students to access,

participate and progress in post-school education. The Outcomes for Disabled Students Group will reconvene once the results of this piece of research are available.

### ***Specifically in relation to Mental Health***

- In 2019 we announced additional funding to build mental health counselling capacity in universities and colleges.
- Our assessment of this policy highlighted the need for tailored responses to meet the needs of a diverse student population.
- We continue to monitor outcomes of students who declare a mental health disability and we continue to work with the Scottish Government team that oversees the 10-year Mental Health Strategy.

### ***Specifically in relation to BSL***

- We set up a BSL Steering Group to oversee the production and publication of BSL National Plans in both sectors.
- In June 2019 we held a BSL showcase event.
- We are currently supporting the Scottish Government with an analysis of the BSL plans in both sectors to inform their progress report due for publication in October 2020.

### **Gender**

- We report progress, including an assessment of gender related commitments and outcomes in OAs and institutional Gender Action Plans, to a Gender Governance Group.
- The Gender Governance Group has expressed a need to see more evidence of the progress being made by institutions in tackling gender imbalances in key subject areas. Accordingly, we have developed a programme of work with Advance HE to identify the progress made and identify examples of good practice.
- We have identified key barriers facing institutions in tackling gender imbalances, developed a network of institutional gender action plan leads to help share good practice in tackling those barriers and developed guidance for institutions in refreshing their action plans. This guidance will be released early next year.

- We are planning our annual gender conference in late January which we be focused on sharing good practice to tackle gender inequality.
- We are funding Advance to support SFC and the institutions that we fund to progress equalities. This includes actions and commitments set out in the SFC's Gender Action Plan.

### ***Specifically in relation to Trans students***

- We updated our student datasets to ensure we are able to collect data regarding the number of Trans or non-binary students at our colleges and universities.
- We will continue to support institutions to collect this data. However, for the foreseeable future we are unlikely to be able to publish this information due to quality control issues.

### ***Race***

- We continue to work with the Scottish Government as it progresses its Race Equality Action Plan.
- We worked closely with the EHRC during the development, and in the run up to the publication, of its inquiry into racial harassment in publicly funded GB universities.
- We worked with the EHRC, Scottish Government and Universities Scotland to host an event on 29<sup>th</sup> October to discuss the findings of the inquiry. As a result we have:
  - Repositioned the Advance HE funded work to ensure the outputs support FE and HE institutions to have effective and meaningful conversations about race.
  - Advance HE will be issuing an ITT to develop an awareness campaign to tackle racism on campus.
  - We are taking steps to set up expert groups to direct the work progressed by Advance HE to ensure that the work is properly informed by the voices and expertise of staff and students who have lived experience of racism.
  - We are working with Universities Scotland to build capacity to address issues of racism by supporting a leadership session at the University Secretaries residential development session on February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020.

- Through Advance HE we fund the Scottish Race Equality Network (SREN) and we are actively supporting the developing priorities of this group, including our support for the SREN Student Working group.
- We provided a report to the board in November 2019 detailing outcomes for students by racial group and we are taking steps to improve the presentation of our race data in our core statistical publications. For example, where possible we will present data at a national level by individual ethnicity classifications rather than overarching 'BME' and 'white' categories.

### ***Care Experience***

- The term 'care-experienced' refers to anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background at any stage of their life, no matter how short, including adopted children who were previously looked-after. This care may have been provided in one of many different settings such as in residential care, foster care, kinship care or through being looked-after at home with a supervision requirement.
- There has been good progress in the representation of this group in both sectors. It is possible that this is in part due to better data collection.
- The data shows care-experienced students are more likely to study at HE level at college than at university, and that care-experienced are benefiting from articulation.
- We have a strategic funding project with Who Cares? Scotland which is geared towards improving outcomes which concludes at the end of AY 2019-20.
- We commissioned CELCIS to undertake a Survey of Care-Experienced Students at College and University. The [findings](#) were published in June 2019 which included 8 learning points and 18 recommendations.
- HEIs have now published their minimum entry criteria for guaranteed offers. As per CoWA recommendation 19, applicants with care-experience are guaranteed an undergraduate place at university if they meet the new minimum entry requirements for a degree programme.
- We are discussing with HR how SFC can support care experienced people in our recruitment processes.

### ***Socio-economic***

- We are members of the Minister's Access Deliver Group and we are now implementing the action plans that support the COWA recommendations that we are directly responsible for delivering.

- We continue to have an internal COWA Steering Group that oversees our progress – this includes the Finance Directorate and the Access, Learning and Outcomes Directorate and is chaired by Linda McLeod.
- We have established a trilateral post between SFC, Colleges Scotland and Universities Scotland to implement the articulation recommendations of COWA including ensuring fair access and representation. We now collect and report on data related to articulation.
- We have just concluded a full equality impact assessment of the policy work supporting COWA.

### ***Other protected characteristics***

There is currently no specific policy work relating to four protected characteristics areas:-

- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

The recent work related to race and harassment more generally is however providing an opportunity to make sure that our interventions and focus consider the needs of students and staff sharing the protected characteristics of sexual orientation and religion and belief. Further, our approach to Equality Impact Assessment ensures that the needs of staff and students sharing these protected characteristics are considered in our work.

As acknowledged in our own PSED mainstreaming report, data quality related to sexual orientation is problematic with high levels of non-disclosure this means it is not possible to include sexual orientation in our national statistics at this stage. However, we are taking steps to ensure that the analysis work required to identify persistent inequalities is informed by knowledge of sexual orientation in the context of data collections. This means that we will not ignore the experiences of LGBT staff and students in our deliberations about the priority areas for attention.

The work that we fund Advance HE to undertake to support institutions identify their own equality outcomes provides an opportunity to build capacity and ensure that institutions can consider each protected characteristic, including marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity, as they take forward work to identify areas for attention.