

Strategic Equity Plan

The Cornwall College Group

2022-2025



Background

Cornwall is a county of contrasts, where affluence sits alongside some of the most disadvantaged areas in England. It is the second largest local authority area in the South West region, covering an area of 3,559 sq. km, and has the longest coastline of all English counties at 697 km. The landscapes and environments you'll encounter in the region vary greatly. These include remote rural, coastal and environmentally sensitive areas, interspersed with villages and historic market towns; where areas of affluence are contrasted by high rates of poverty, inequality and insecure work.

Strengthening Cornwall's economy is an ongoing challenge – low economic output (per capita), low wages, low productivity and a lack of big companies have been persistent challenges.

Deprivation is a persistent problem in Cornwall. Around 15.9% of children and young people in the region are part of low-income families. Close to 68,800 people (equating to 34,400 households or 12.7% of the population), live in the 20% most 'deprived' communities in England. In some cases, the deprivation prevalent in these areas has not changed for many years. Challenges such as income and health inequality, paired with a lack of visible higher-level jobs has impacted on ambition and aspiration in young people in the county. Income inequality is linked to health inequality. Mental health and physical health needs and levels of sickness and disability benefit claimants are closely linked to areas of known inequality. Also, sadly the suicide rate in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is higher than both the South West and national average.

Historically, due to minimal higher education opportunities in Cornwall, local talent has been lost with young people leaving the county to pursue university-level qualifications. Subsequently they struggle to return once qualified, due to the lack of suitable employment opportunities available in the region.

Values

The Cornwall College Group (TCCG) has embraced equity expressed as equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) as one of its core values. Equity should be present and visible in everything that we do, and we are committed to advancing equity in all its forms. To achieve this ambition, we need to increase our understanding of how to advance equity, including the challenges and barriers that our students, staff and stakeholders may face, and to develop a culture ensuring that members of those communities are empowered to raise issues, make change and have equitable opportunities.

Vision

Our ambition is to create a college where we recognise and celebrate differences, encourage diverse contributions and create a climate where our community feel able to be authentic. Our culture will be one of respect, openness, collaboration and creativity, living our values and ethics. We've set ourselves stretching aims to be achieved by 2025, made visible to all our students, employees and stakeholders, so we're accountable for changing the way we work while monitoring the progress we make. These goals support the TCCG Strategic Aims with particular relevance to "People: Ensure the college is a highly desirable and inclusive employer through valuing, developing and recognising staff and "Quality of Education": Set a culture of high expectations for our students' achievements, progress and career destinations". We are strengthening our links within our local communities by creating college environments that are welcoming and accessible to all in order to create a sense of belonging allowing us to reach out to those who have

previously not seen education "as being for them". A sense of belonging has been positively associated with academic success, but will also enable our students to leave TCCG as culturally literate, fair and open-minded individuals.

Our Strategic Equity Plan will bring focus and coherence to our current efforts to promote equity at TCCG and will guide and prioritise future actions and policy.

Performance against goals will be tracked, measured and then reported through the College Operations Group, ELT and reported annually to our Board. We will measure how our employees feel through feedback, surveys and discussions regarding equity that are held during meetings across the Group. Our Strategic Equity Plan 2022-2025 is built around three stakeholder groups.

Our Students

We want all students to be able to thrive and enjoy student life and the learning experience. We need to ensure students can feedback and drive continuous improvement.

Our Staff

We want to be recognised as an employer which embeds equity into all that we do. We want to recognise where we need to improve based on robust feedback from staff.

The Wider Community

For TCCG to serve the community in a responsible manner, it will require a diverse range of voices to represent the community.

Our objectives and how we can achieve them

Objective 1: Establish TCCG as one that supports an inclusive student journey through recruitment, admissions, wellbeing and learning environment.

- Ensure our admissions processes are fair and transparent for all
- Work with students and staff to create a fully inclusive curriculum
- Use data effectively to act to reduce any differentials for learners with protected characteristics and from wider equality groups
- Establish an EDI strategy for Student Support and Wellbeing
- Strengthen our community liaison and partnerships as well as developing new opportunities to enhance the community voice, to develop our understanding of community need ensuring that we make a difference to the health and wellbeing of those within our direct surrounding areas.

Objective 2: Create a staff environment where we improve the diversity of our recruitment and enable our staff to progress and develop in a supportive environment.

- Demonstrate that our recruitment processes are fair and transparent for each job role across all pathways
- Continue the work led by HR on equal pay, treatment and opportunity
- Provide equity of opportunity to support staff career progression and development, in order to retain motivated and confident staff where the locale offers limited career progression opportunities
- Establish robust mechanisms for staff voice to support, drive and measure improvements in equity.

Objective 3: Create an inclusive culture based on building and maintaining relationships.

- Establish an inclusive learning, teaching and research environment for staff and students based on a culture of trust
- Provide education and training for staff, students, employers and the community about equity, diversity and tolerance and empower them to challenge where equity is not evident
- Support students and staff in fostering good relations and building team dynamics
- Deal with issues, incidents and complaints in an effective way to enable an early resolution and to support improvements.

Objective 4: Create an accessible, physical and digital environment that is responsive and supportive to individual needs.

- Create a welcoming, accessible campus and take steps to remove barriers for people with diverse needs
- Provide a digital environment that gives all users a positive and accessible experience.

Objective 5: Enhance our governance structures and committee membership, and establish assurance processes to support adherence to the legal, ethical and professional standard so that we place equality, diversity and inclusion at the centre of the decisions that we make.

- Look at how we can widen the diversity of membership across all TCCG committees and groups
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion as a key consideration in TCCG activities and decision making.

Why do we need this Plan?

As a public authority, under our Public Sector Equality Duty, TCCG is required to publish a Strategic Equality Plan which sets out and justifies equality plan objectives and explains how the College will achieve the objectives and who will benefit from them. We go beyond the Public Sector Equality Duty, who only cover 9 protected characteristics, by including characteristics significant to our different localities, including income and health inequality. TCCG publishes an annual report with information about our progress, together with equality information about our workforce and student body.

There are three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty to which public bodies are required to have due regard:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those from wider equality groups and those who do not
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic or who are from a wider equality group and those who do not.

The TCCG Strategic Equity Plan will be published and reviewed every year in a report monitoring progress against actions. The overarching objectives will be reviewed every three years.

Success

To succeed in making our vision real, it is vital that the responsibility for promoting equity is shared by everyone in our community. Equity is not an optional extra, or a job that falls only to leaders and managers or to committees, we must embrace this as a college in order to be successful.

We are resolved to be transparent about the challenges ahead; we know that we operate in a society that is challenged by inequities. Wherever possible we will seek to fulfil our mission as a college to be an agent of positive influence and change. Sometimes we will face challenging choices because our resources are finite and we cannot immediately do everything that our aspirations demand. We will be transparent where we cannot yet meet an aspiration and prioritise actions which we feel will have the greatest impact.

Communication Strategy for the Plan

The Plan is TCCG's open commitment to equity and key to its success is effective communication to staff, students and the wider community. An awareness of the College's objectives will give visible reassurance of our work plans and provide an opportunity to feed into and guide future activities. The Plan will be published on TCCG's websites. The communication strategy will be supported by the Colleges' communication and marketing team and initial plans are to promote the Plan via internal channels such as Insight, College Operations Groups and ELT Cascade.

Governance and responsibility

Responsibility for this strategy and its delivery rests with the Executive Leadership Team championed by the Deputy Principal Group Curriculum and Quality. Work will be steered by TCCG's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee in consultation with Students' Union, Professional Services committees, EDI project groups and the recognised Trade Unions. On the Board there is a Lead Governor for EDI and the Board discharges their oversight for this area through the Curriculum and Quality Committee, with annual reporting to Board.

We will publish information to show our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges.

Strategic Action Plan

Objective 1: Establish TCCG as one that supports an inclusive student journey through recruitment, admissions, wellbeing and the learning environment.

To achieve this objective, we need to:

- Implement a fair and transparent admissions process for each course at TCCG that enables entry for all potential candidates. This will include schemes to introduce diverse material in course advertisement to encourage diverse applications from students from different backgrounds
- Introduce targets to provide focus and actions to improve internal representation and involvement of under-represented groups

- Establish an EDI strategy for Student Support and Wellbeing, which supports the wellbeing, retention and employability of students with protected characteristics or from a wider equality group. This should include the collection and analysis of equality data to help evaluate whether provision is supporting students with different protected characteristics or from wider equality groups.

Objective 2: Create a staff environment where we improve the diversity of our recruitment and enable our staff to progress and develop in a supportive environment.

To achieve this objective, we need to:

- Ensure a fair and transparent recruitment process for each of our job roles at TCCG that enables accessibility for all potential applicants and supports an inclusive research culture. This will include schemes to identify barriers to recruitment and review processes to promote engagement from a diverse pool of applicants
- We will maintain our commitment to the “Disability Confident” scheme as an employer and undergo annual assessment as such
- Continue TCCG’s commitment to equal pay, treatment and opportunity. We will continue to work with our union colleagues with regard to equal pay audits
- We will continue to monitor, publish and act to reduce the Gender Pay Gap
- Continue to embed wellbeing in our leadership and management programmes, enhancing our mental health and wellbeing programmes as part of our Staff Wellbeing Strategy
- Review the Ofsted framework for protected characteristics and implement a TCCG scheme which aligns with this framework.

Objective 3: Support individual identity and a continual journey of learning, through increased awareness and a supportive culture.

To achieve this objective, we need to:

- Establish an inclusive learning, teaching and research environment for staff and students based on a culture of trust that empowers and equips individuals to build and maintain relationships
- Establish a TCCG level consensus on development of an inclusive curriculum. This will consider the learning environment and the content of programmes and will ensure students have knowledge of the specific protected characteristics or wider equality groups they will need to support within their profession
- Ensure commitment from all TCCG leaders and managers as well as key stakeholder engagement on adopting the values and behaviours required to ensure a culture of inclusion
- Work with an external provider on initial training and strategic briefing to these groups on the vision for cultural change. Establish baseline staff and student satisfaction from existing surveys on the current environment and culture to enable measurement of impact
- Actively embed a supportive culture; as leading by example is a key part of changing the culture of an organisation, our leadership will continue to commit to role modelling TCCG’s values. We will provide mechanisms, support and training for our students and staff to develop knowledge and learn
- Empower our students and staff to create safe spaces, where they are able to share experiences, can make mistakes, question and constructively challenge through respectful and inclusive language. Equality and diversity will add depth, breadth and creativity to our curriculum and prepare our learners better for the wider world and employment. It will strengthen an understanding of the British Values of democracy and the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of the beliefs and faiths of other

- Collaborate internally and externally to develop good practice and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic or who are from a wider equality group and people who do not share it
- Communicate and be open to dialogue and challenge on our work on equity through provision of training and development of staff.

Objective 4: Create an accessible, physical and digital environment that is responsive and supportive to individual needs.

To achieve this objective, we need to:

- Create a welcoming, accessible environment that enables effective orientation and reduction of barriers for groups and individuals with diverse needs
- Ensure as far as is possible that the digital environment is a positive and accessible experience for all users. Ongoing review of provision and content with a focus on accessibility around TCCG estate long term
- Complete an accessibility audit of key buildings and develop an action plan based on the key findings. A rolling programme of actions will follow recommendations of the ‘way finding project’ signage report focused on main campus buildings, whilst ensuring new buildings follow recommendations for accessibility including signage. Accessible facilities will be audited across campuses and areas prioritised for improvement.

Objective 5: Enhance our governance structures and committee membership, in addition to establishing assurance processes to support adherence to the legal, ethical and professional standards, placing equality diversity and inclusion at the centre of the decisions that we make.

To achieve this objective, we need to:

- Embed EDI into our core organisational culture; in all areas of our working and learning environments. To achieve this, we will continually question the way we do things, reflect, and recognise how to maintain our strengths and improve as needed
- Identify and implement strategies to widen the diversity of membership across all TCCG committees and groups
- Develop a process for EDI Committee to have oversight of progress with the Strategic Equity Plan actions, enabling it to scrutinise progress, identify and advise on any drift in achieving outcomes and/or failure to move on to next phase of the action’s implementation
- Ensure strong EDI governance through a lead Governor and support from external specialists. We will ensure that students and staff at all levels across TCCG are included and given the opportunity to contribute to appropriate decision making. We will foster a culturally aware community where people have the confidence and skills to constructively challenge others when required, to have conversations on what may be complex EDI issues and have confidence that we have safe and non-judgmental settings to do that within
- Strengthen forums for staff and student consultations that nurture our aspiration for organisational culture and inclusion.

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