

## CURRICULUM, QUALITY AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

30 MAY 2024

### Student Welfare and Guidance Update

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF PAPER

##### For discussion

This paper provides an update on activity within the Student Support Services Team between February and May 2024.

#### 2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a growing need for support in relation to mental health and learning support. Student Services Managers are exploring opportunities to strengthen partnerships, upskill colleagues and build capacity in response to these challenges.

There is an ongoing focus on service development and upskilling with various members of the support team involved in projects designed to improve student support delivery.

Scottish Government Mental Health and Wellbeing Transitional funding is being utilised to transition away from current counselling arrangements, largely through the development of safe student spaces and upskilling of pastoral staff.

#### 3.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)/ACTION(S) REQUIRED

I recommend that the Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee agree that the Student Support Services team are continuing to drive improvements within the service.

#### 4.0 BACKGROUND

The Student Support Services team provide a range of pastoral support on matters relating to course information, funding and benefits, progression and articulation, welfare, health and wellbeing, and learning support.

#### 5.0 STUDENT WELFARE AND GUIDANCE REPORT

##### 5.1 Learning Support

A total of **298** students are currently in receipt of learning support. Including those who have withdrawn, **379** students have been supported in the current academic year. This is an increase of **22%** since 2022-23.

In 2023-24, **26.1%** of all Borders College students had disclosed a disability or learning need. This is an increase of **2.5%** since 2022-23. Over the last 3 academic years, disability disclosures have increased by **13.3%**.

## 5.2 Welfare Support

To date, **60** self-referrals for support have been received. **83%** of referrals are in relation to mental health and wellbeing.

As of May 2024, a total of **687** individual support logs were created on ProMonitor with over **3970** separate interactions with students recorded.

The 3 main areas for support/contact are:

1. Academic issues
2. Emotional/personal wellbeing
3. General advice/guidance

## 5.3 Transitions

Visits to the 9 Borders High Schools are underway to discuss transition arrangements for pupils most likely to experience barriers to sustaining education.

A number of transition and induction activities have been planned for Summer 2024 in order to support students into the college and ensure they are aware of the support available to them. This includes Quiet Induction events, summer drop-in sessions, specific care-experience socials, welcome sessions, student support fairs and online campaigns.

## 5.4 Wellbeing Spaces

A 'Wellbeing Space' has been developed within the Student Advice Centre. This provides a calm and cosy area for students to receive wellbeing and mental health support. A further two Wellbeing Spaces are being developed at Galashiels and Newtown campuses. This work has been supported by the Scottish Government's Mental Health and Wellbeing Transitional funding.

## 5.5 Ongoing Projects

Borders College Support Hubs will launch in 2024-25. The Hubs will provide a dedicated space where key organisations meet regularly with students. Partners will include social work, No One Left Behind, the NHS Wellbeing Team and other key agencies. This will improve accessibility of local services and enhance the valuable partnerships we have with local organisations.

A trauma-informed steering group has been established at Borders College as part of a wider project to becoming a trauma informed college. The Director of Student Support Services is leading on this work, supported by two trained Trauma-Informed Leads.

We are working with Boutique Innovations to develop 'Student Services of the future'. This project involved consultation with students across Borders College in relation to the effectiveness of student support delivery. A co-creation workshop will be held with staff to review student feedback and develop an action plan to address key themes.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS**

### **6.1 Financial Implications**

The Scottish Government's Mental Health and Wellbeing Transitional funding is being utilised to transition away from current mental health arrangements. Funding is being used to maintain a level of counselling support, develop safe spaces for students, and upskill student support staff. Discussions with local partners are ongoing in terms of strengthening partnerships, and a number of engagement visits have been planned to other colleges within the sector to share practice and discuss transition arrangements.

Robertson's Trust funding comes to an end in March 2025. This funding stream enables us to deliver the Borders Young Talent Mentor project. A working group will assemble to develop a bid for a new project aimed at supporting students who have experienced trauma to sustain their place at college.

### **6.2 Learner Implications**

A number of projects are underway to improve the delivery of student support. These projects aim to support improved retention and achievement for students.

### **6.3 Staff Implications**

Training and development opportunities will support a more confident and informed pastoral team that are better equipped to identify support interventions for students.

### **6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications/Equality Impact Assessment**

The work undertaken by the Student Services team is underpinned by discussions around equality and inclusion. Accessibility and inclusion are prioritised in all discussions.

### **6.5 Sustainability/Environmental Implications**

There are no direct implications in relation to sustainability and environment.

## **7.0 RISK COMMENTARY**

Through developments within the support service, we are reducing the risk that a student experiences crisis and is unsuccessful on their course.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 This paper aims to provide assurance to the Committee that the Student Services team is continuing to develop its offer in response to increasing student support needs and has plans in place to address future funding challenges.

Amy Brydon

Director of Student Support Services

17 May 2024

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