



**EQUALITY,
DIVERSITY,
INCLUSION AND
BELONGING
STRATEGY**



FOREWORD

LIZ BROMLEY, CEO

Our new Strategy Towards 2030 articulates our intention to deliver exceptional education as a diverse and ambitious learning organisation, in order to enable social mobility and economic prosperity for those whom we serve.

Threaded throughout all that we do is our commitment to Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging– EDIB. This means equality of opportunity to both our learner, student, apprentice¹ and colleague communities; an understanding of the rich experience we all gain from a diverse learner body and similar diversity in our staff base; and a culture that is inclusive – welcoming people from any and all backgrounds and life experiences, respectful of the differences they bring to our communities, and acknowledging that we have much to learn from being both inclusive and diverse.

Before the lockdown of 2020, we commissioned an external review of our policy and practice as we understood that there can be a significant difference between an 'EDI compliant' organisation, and embedded cultural best practice which drives EDIB awareness through everything that we do. We took the recommendations from that expert, external review, and have made them the basis of this EDIB Strategy.

We also undertook a commitment to training and development in EDI awareness and understanding of best practice, and commissioned an ILM Level 4 programme for our EDIB Champions (based right across NCG's national footprint) and for all of our Group Executive – including myself.

We will continue with this commitment to continuing professional development in EDIB, cascading it right across our colleges and Professional Services. This will build upon the Inclusive Leadership development that has now been undertaken by all middle/senior leaders across the whole Group, and which will also be rolled out to more junior managers – a significant commitment to ensuring that our leadership understands that an inclusive culture is key to realising our ambition to make NCG synonymous with EDIB.

It is said that at the heart of a thriving community, there will be a thriving college. At NCG we believe that this strategy will play a key role in ensuring that our communities are not only thriving, but are also more equal, diverse and inclusive places. If we are to deliver our mission to enable social mobility and economic prosperity we must do this through education that is exceptional in its commitment to EDIB best practice – and this is what this strategy aims to do.

I hope that you enjoy reading it and watching its impact on our communities over the coming years.

Thanks

Liz.

¹ Note we generally use the term 'learner'; to refer to 16-18 learners, adult and HE students, apprentices and commercial clients in this document.

ABOUT NCG

NCG is a values-based organisation, with a strategic direction based on a mission to enable social mobility and economic prosperity, through exceptional education.

We are a family of colleges bound by the same mission, strategic aims and a number of business-critical policy frameworks. However, each college retains a very unique identity which is based on its heritage, its curriculum and its place in the community. Professional Services is a support function, dispersed throughout the Group's locations to support the delivery of exceptional education.

Our colleagues, customers and learners have worked together to help define the NCG values to which we all subscribe to as an organisation. These values help underpin the corporate

cultures and beliefs of our organisation and are aimed at developing a collective identity and pride for those working for, working with, studying and training at NCG.

Our values help define how we should behave towards our colleagues and learners, and provide us with basic guidance on what should govern our decisions to help us make the right ones.

OUR VALUES

We value and empower people by:

Being both **inclusive** and **diverse**



Trusting and **respecting**
our communities



Taking **ownership** whilst
working **collaboratively**



Inspiring **excellence** and **curiosity**

OUR VISION AND STRATEGIC AIMS

OUR VISION AND STRATEGIC AIMS

NCG’s mission sets out the ambition we aim to realise, whilst our vision describes how we will know when we get there. To underpin both, we have six strategic themes that are based on fundamental pillars of the organisation (quality, curriculum, people, facilities, finance, reach). Our focus in each of those themes is on continuous improvement towards excellence, and therefore it is essential that our EDIB work is fully integrated into all six areas.

ENSURING OUR STRATEGIC AIMS ARE INCLUSIVE, DIVERSE AND EQUITABLE

We have been careful in the development of this EDIB strategy to avoid creating a new set of NCG aims related exclusively to EDIB – the rationale for this is simple: if our overarching mission, vision and strategic aims do not facilitate,

promote, advocate and champion the aims set out in the Equality Act (2010) and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED, 2011) to advance equality, diversity and inclusion, then we need to rethink our fundamental approach entirely.

So instead we have aligned the deliverables of this strategy to each of the NCG strategic aims – in doing so we aim to ensure that inclusion, diversity and equality are embedded in every core strategic function. There is also a proportional focus on inclusion in our deliverables, as equity is mandated by law, diversity is fact of life, yet inclusion is a choice – and we choose to be inclusive and to work to ensure that everyone involved with NCG feels that they belong with us.

VISION

To be the UK’s leading college group recognised for our local impact, national influence and reach.

★ QUALITY	★ CURRICULUM	★ PEOPLE	★ FACILITIES	★ FINANCE	★ REACH
Exceptional teaching, learner experience and outcomes	Innovative, relevant courses and qualifications	Ambitious and responsible educators and leaders	Outstanding digital and physical learning environments	Financial sustainability powering reinvestment	Impactful external engagement and civic commitment

MISSION

Enabling social mobility and economic prosperity through exceptional education.

Strategic Theme	Curriculum	Quality	People	Facilities	Finance	Reach
Strategic Aim	Innovative, relevant courses and qualifications	Exceptional teaching, learner experience and outcomes	Ambitious and responsible educators and leaders	Outstanding digital and physical learning environments	Financial sustainability powering reinvestment	Impactful external engagement and civic commitment
EDI Aim (aligned)	To deliver an inclusive, fair, and varied curriculum to all learners	To inspire all learners to achieve and secure economic prosperity, regardless of starting points	To work collaboratively and take ownership for our values in all aspects of our work and advance opportunity throughout the organisation	To ensure our physical resources meet the needs of all learners and staff	To work collaboratively to invest in our learning communities	To champion EDIB themes and campaigns locally and nationally
How we will know when we get there	When our curriculum results in positive destinations for all ² our learners, regardless of starting points	When no significant ³ differences exist between learner groups at NCG, who in turn perform in line with the best GFECs	When our learner and staff engagement work reports overwhelming positive experiences at NCG	When all learners, no matter their needs, have the materials, tools and equipment required to help them succeed	When our resource management ensures that we are able to confidently invest in the continuous improvement of all our curriculum and learning communities	When NCG is identifiable in all communities it serves, with our mission and values we have set out
How we will measure our progress	Annual Destination Survey	Qualifications Achievement Rates and Learner Progress Data(QAR)	Staff Survey Learner Exit Survey	Learner Exit Survey	EBITDA ⁴	Stakeholder engagement surveys and forums
Where we will report our progress	NCG and College Self-Assessment Reports	NCG and College Self-Assessment Reports	NCG and College Self-Assessment Reports Equal Pay Reporting	NCG and College Self-Assessment Reports	Annual Accounts	Board Strategy Review Updates

² The term 'all' is used to signal intent and the need for continuous improvement for all learners, it is unlikely that 100% will ever be achieved and therefore we will use the relevant KPI to measure success.

³ The term statistical is used to refer to statistical significance.

⁴ EBITDA – earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation – a measure of profitability of working capital that can potentially be re-invested.

INTENT STATEMENT

There is a clear ethical, moral, social and educational case for why equality, diversity and inclusion matter and why the associated themes should be at the forefront of our strategic action planning. Knowing the communities that we serve and responding to their diverse needs is at the very heart of our educational offer and service.

NCG aims to be an open and welcoming place that inspires excellence and curiosity through exceptional education. We will continue to build a teaching and learning community that is both diverse and equitable. We will create opportunities for personal development, economic prosperity by working together, trusting and respecting each other's identities, and for taking ownership and responsibilities for our actions.

At NCG we have no tolerance for hate and will oppose discrimination of any kind, should we identify it. In doing so we are committed to maintaining our efforts to ensure the greatest possible chance that all learners can achieve personal advancement, social mobility and economic prosperity. For the avoidance of doubt:

- NCG is committed to the equality of opportunity
- NCG is an anti-sexist organisation
- NCG will not tolerate misogynistic views or behaviour
- NCG stands against racism
- NCG is against violence and exploitation in all forms
- NCG will not tolerate sexual harassment
- NCG stands against homophobia
- NCG welcomes all faiths
- NCG is against anti-Semitism and adopts the international definition of anti-Semitism



OUR CURRICULUM

Curriculum [noun]: **‘The framework for setting out the aims of a programme of education, including the knowledge and skills gained at each stage’** Ofsted.

The curriculum at NCG is largely based on national standards, which we receive from various awarding organisations or exam boards that we choose to work with. We select these courses based on a number of factors: **national and local skills priorities and available jobs; courses that will help build toward a successful education and career; courses where there is a strong demand from learners; or because there is a community need. A smaller number of courses are aimed at adults who attend for recreational or social purposes.**

Whilst everyone has the basic right to an education, and therefore a right to access our curriculum, there are generally funding constraints that dictate whether or not the government will fund an individual's place and these rules are often complex. However, NCG will guarantee that every individual who applies to our colleges will be treated as an individual and will be considered and supported to find the best possible solution and pathway available.

Whilst the vast majority of our course content is defined by national standards, we have a duty to continuously review the content to ensure that it remains current, relevant, fair, balanced and inclusive. Some courses we will design ourselves, such as higher education courses for example, and there is a duty to consider equality and inclusivity at all stages of the development through agreed frameworks.



NCG TODAY

The table below highlights the approximate proportion of declared⁵ staff and learner characteristics in a number of areas:

	Staff (Feb 2021)	Learners (Apr 2021)
Female	61%	56%
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicities ⁶	11%	34%
LGBTQ	6%	Not Collected
Declared Disability or Difficulty	5%	20%

ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

We monitor closely the achievement gaps of our learners based on a number of standard characteristics. We are able to undertake this work accurately on the learner record system, due to nationally-consistent funding requirements.

In general, learners at NCG broadly do as well as each other, and where small gaps exist they often appear consistent with a national trend. There are small variances from college to college, and the detail is available in the annual college self-assessment. The following provides a broad summary at NCG level (colleges combined):

- **16-18 boys and girls achieve at broadly the same rate.**
- **Adult female learners achieve at a slightly higher rate than adult male learners.**
- **There is no significant difference between White British learners⁷ and other ethnic groups at the headline level other than the Black Caribbean ethnic group learners and the White Gypsy and Irish Traveller ethnic group perform less well on average than their peers.**
- **Learners from the least deprived post codes achieve slightly higher on average, than those from most deprived.**
- **Learners eligible for free meals achieve equally as well as their peers who are not eligible.**
- **Achievement is marginally higher for adult learners with a declared difficulty/disability than those learners without.**
- **The vast majority of apprentices are White British.**

⁵ Note that the accuracy of this information relies on self-declaration in some cases.

⁶ % is calculated from known staff self-declarations; staff preferring 'not to say' or 'unknown' has been excluded from this figure.

⁷ Note that NCG has adopted the government guidance and phrasing when writing about ethnicity. It is essential to note that ethnicity is often the focus, rather than nationality. For example, the majority of Black African learners at NCG are British; White British, Chinese, Indian etc are therefore an ethnicity group, rather than nationality when used in such reporting unless specified.

IMPLEMENTING THIS EDIB STRATEGY

Some of the deliverables are promoted and coordinated centrally (usually those that apply to the wider Group), whilst others are required to be adopted into local contexts and therefore form the basis of the College EDIB action plan, that may additionally include specific areas of focus for the College.

A working group of College EDIB Champions is convened (half-termly) to monitor progress, suggest continuous improvement actions and share best practice. Each College is required to ensure that staff and learner focus groups are available to review the efficacy of the strategy and to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement.

OUR EDIB DELIVERABLES

We have chosen to outline a number of deliverables, aligned to our strategic aims. We are using the word 'deliverable', rather than 'objective' or 'outcomes', as we fully intend to succeed within the prescribed timescale and for this reason the deliverables must be achievable.

Whilst we have consulted with our governors, staff, learners and stakeholder, we fully expect the deliverables to change organically due to context and relative degrees of success, hence the timeframes proposed are relatively short.



ACTION PLAN FOR NCG LEADERS: WE INTEND TO DELIVER THE FOLLOWING:

Theme	Strategic Aim	Deliverables
Quality	Exceptional teaching, learner experience and outcomes	<p>Short Term⁸ EDIB Deliverables under theme 1:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Convene learner-led focus groups /learner EDIB champions groups with diverse characteristics, to provide a safe space to highlight their respective experiences for action-response and seek to understand/respond to any perceived or actual barriers to access and participation. Establish learner characteristic filters in version 2 of the data dashboards to immediately identify and respond to emerging gaps in engagement, knowledge and skills development and learner destinations. Implement an NCG wide approach to support mental wellbeing and fitness through structured use of FIKA to build resilience and support retention. <p>Medium Term⁹ EDIB Deliverables under theme 1:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver contextualised training to staff and seek to understand and champion EDIB themes, including anti-racism, divisive or outdated curriculum content and subsequently embed into their leadership, teaching and business support activity. Produce high quality NCG staff/learner role model case studies to be used as a tutorial resources to highlight the varying backgrounds, experiences and challenges faced by our staff and learners in their work and communities.
Curriculum	Innovative, relevant courses and qualifications	<p>Short Term⁸ EDIB Deliverables under theme 2:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen curriculum leader training and subsequent use of destination reports to inform course-level and dept level self-assessment to ensure potential micro-inequalities, or micro-exclusions, are identified for action-response. Expand learner destination survey capture to facilitate the monitoring of at risk groups. Develop an approach to help identify and remove any areas of the curriculum that could propagate stereotypes or residual discrimination.

8 Short term = 12 months

9 Medium term = 18 months

ACTION PLAN FOR NCG LEADERS: WE INTEND TO DELIVER THE FOLLOWING:

Theme	Strategic Aim	Deliverables
Curriculum	Innovative, relevant courses and qualifications	<p>Medium Term⁹ EDI Deliverables under theme 2:</p> <p>4. Integrate a digital skills assessment and associated training package into the workstream on the NCG Guarantee and thereby seek to ensure that all learners have the digital skills required to access the curriculum.</p> <p>5. Prioritise partner delivery (franchise/subcontracting) where it is targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, above other potential contracts.</p> <p>6. Increase the diversity of apprentices at NCG with a focus to improve proportional representation of race, disability, and care leavers by targeted WEX and promotion of vacancies internally.</p>
People	Ambitious and responsible educators and leaders	<p>Short Term⁸ EDIB Deliverables under theme 3:</p> <p>1. Appoint link EDIB governor and staff champions in all colleges to support the establishment of representative staff focus groups (similar to learner groups in theme 1) and to monitor/advise on the efficacy of this strategy.</p> <p>2. Produce an annual calendar to highlight EDIB activity, key dates of faith dates, celebrations and festivals, international days.</p> <p>3. Deliver Leadership Hub training to all managers on EDIB and inclusive leadership, role and commitment, unconscious bias and designing inclusive policy.</p> <p>4. Update EDIB mandatory training and ensure it is complementary to the contextualised training to be delivered in point 3 and in theme 1.</p>

8 Short term = 12 months

9 Medium term = 18 months

ACTION PLAN FOR NCG LEADERS: WE INTEND TO DELIVER THE FOLLOWING:

Theme	Strategic Aim	Deliverables
People	Ambitious and responsible educators and leaders	<p>Medium Term⁹ EDIB Deliverables under theme 3:</p> <p>5. Promote and champion sector EDIB initiatives and campaigns with representation on relevant panels, boards and forums.</p> <p>6. Improve: staff data associated with EDIB for purposes of monitoring equitable recruitment, pay and promotion to target positive action response to tackle areas of under-representation.</p> <p>7. Proactively utilise community-based advertising of vacancies to ensure staff representation is reflection of our local communities.</p> <p>8. Integrate an opportunity for all staff to highlight their own contribution to these deliverables in the annual appraisal</p>
Facilities	Outstanding digital and physical learning environments	<p>Short Term⁸ EDIB Deliverables under theme 4:</p> <p>1. Respond to the digital divide with the annual provision of IT and accessibility equipment to vulnerable groups as part of the NCG Digital Challenge Fund.</p> <p>2. Maintain the NCG ILT Development Group as an innovation and focus on digital inclusion and to develop solutions to widen participation.</p> <p>3. Undertake an annual audit against specific EDIB criteria* to review accessibility, signage, space for worship and faith, provision of food in catering facilities, adequacy of gender neutral toilet facilities to ensure all NCG campus are accessible, safe and welcoming. (*note – will review existing approaches/format as much is covered by legislation already).</p> <p>Medium Term⁹ EDIB Deliverables under theme 4:</p> <p>4. Respond to any inadequacy in the availability of college quiet digital study areas for learners without such space and facilities at home.</p> <p>5. Action any requirement for social wellbeing spaces and continue to action any estates-based ‘hot-spots’ for the likely occurrence of bullying and harassment.</p>

⁹ Medium term = 18 months

ACTION PLAN FOR NCG LEADERS: WE INTEND TO DELIVER THE FOLLOWING:

Theme	Strategic Aim	Deliverables
Finance	<p>Outstanding digital and physical learning environments</p> <p>Financial sustainability, powering reinvestment</p>	<p>Short Term⁸ EDIB Deliverables under theme 5:</p> <p>1. Facilitate the deliverables within this plan with a dedicated and costed financial plan.</p> <p>2. Extend funding to build on excellent work achieved via the Care Leaver Coordinators pilot, to learn from what has worked and to extend the programme to other disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.</p> <p>Medium Term⁹ EDIB Deliverables under theme 5:</p> <p>3. Benchmark internally, and where possible externally, the annual expenditure given to dedicated cost centres and projects intended to promote inclusion and seek to build capacity annually, including an allocation of discretionary funding to support underrepresented or 'at risk' groups.</p>
Reach	Impactful external engagement and civic commitment	<p>Short Term⁸ EDIB Deliverables under theme 6:</p> <p>28. Ally and champion national groups who are actively working to promote EDIB strands consistent with our mission, values and these deliverables by supporting with governance (where invited to do so) participation and attendance at key events, conferences and forum.</p> <p>29. Require curriculum teams to reach out to marginalised and/or separated communities as part of deliberate college strategy for social and community engagement – undertake community project work, volunteering and providing physical support to local charitable initiatives.</p> <p>Medium Term⁹ EDIB Deliverables under theme 6:</p> <p>30. Partner with NCG alumni for the benefit of learners in securing work experience and progression opportunities, sponsorship of equipment and patronage of related subject sectors.</p> <p>31. Develop training opportunities and progression agreements with local charities and community groups to signpost staff vacancies and volunteering opportunities to level-up underrepresentation.</p> <p>32. Promote our success stories to our learners and stakeholders via sector media publications, though leadership blogs, website news and social media (externally) and staff and learner communications (internally).</p>

⁸ Short term = 12 months

⁹ Medium term = 18 months

ACTION PLAN FOR NCG LEADERS: WE INTEND TO DELIVER THE FOLLOWING:

Theme	Strategic Aim	Deliverables
Reach	Impactful external engagement and civic commitment	33. Integrate these EDIB deliverables into employer forums for the purposes of civic engagement and continuous improvement – seek to establish the perceptions and barriers faced by SMEs in recruiting a diverse workforce and embedding EDIB themes into our partnership work.