Towards a Trans Positive Culture

Bradford College working in partnership

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are an estimated 28,000 Trans students in Higher Education, around one third of those students will have experienced bullying or harassment on campus, and approximately half of them will have seriously considered dropping out of their course during their time in higher education (NUS Report 2014, cited by Young-Powell and Page, 2014).

With these compelling statistics in mind, Bradford College commissioned research to be undertaken with support from the Equality Challenge Unit to evaluate the degree to which the College is able to sustain and promote a Trans positive culture within its various communities and to make recommendations for ways to improve the experience and outcomes for all current and potential Trans students.

Bradford College is one of the largest Further Education (FE) Colleges in the UK with over 19,000 FE students and almost 4,000 Higher Education (HE) students making up the cohort of learners, and over 1500 staff (FE and HE combined).

The research, conducted during March and April 2015 utilised both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and used the 'Cultural Web' as a framework for analysis. The assumption being that if elusive and taken for granted assumptions can be identified, then culture as an objective reality can be evaluated and changed to meet organisational goals and objectives (Johnson, Scholes and Whittington, 2011).

The report notes that Bradford College supports a campaigning and award winning Student Union and proactive Student Services team, who work jointly to celebrate and promote diversity. In so doing, strong overt messages and images are generated, which in turn are developed and amplified by a large body of professional and empathic staff and combine to create a generally welcoming atmosphere for all students. However, within this, a number of gaps were identified, generated in part by the historical absence of a specific focus on the more unique needs of the Trans community: low levels of experience of providing support for Trans students; absence of a Policy and Guidance document for Trans students; some lack of awareness and understanding of Trans issues in the staff and student population; and a lack of Trans student data to fully track whether appropriate support is being provided and whether their educational experiences and outcomes meet the standards and expectations set by the College.

The recommendations contained within this report include: management of initial impressions and the quality of first contact experience; a range of Trans focussed staff and student learning solutions are developed; clear support pathways, resources and structures

are implemented and clearly accessible; and internal and external marketing is co-ordinated to enhance communication of the College's values and the expectation that those values are consistently demonstrated throughout the student experience by all of the College's communities.

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1.1 Introduction

This research project was sponsored the Equality and Diversity good practice fund 2014/15, supported by the Skills Funding Agency and Equality Challenge Unit, which funds projects which advance equality, diversity and inclusion for learners in the Further Education (FE) sector. The focus of the fund for 2014/15 is: embedding, sustaining and spreading good practice in supporting learners to participate and achieve in FE; and developing the capacity of the sector to meet the public sector equality duty.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Research

The aims of this project include: creating a more accessible, welcoming, supportive and inclusive learning environment and experience at Bradford College, which better meets the needs of the Trans community.

This research, which concludes the first stage of the project, was designed with the with the following aims:

- Increasing understanding of the Trans community's perception and experience of Further Education and in particular Bradford College; and
- Raising awareness of issues faced by the Trans community, particularly in relation to entering or returning back to education.

The specific objectives of the research were to identify:

- Barriers to accessing FE for Trans people
- Support needs specific to Trans people within an FE context
- Training needs for teaching and support staff
- Perceptions of the college of existing Trans students
- Perceptions of the college of the local Trans community.

The project steering group approved the research design, and data gathering was then carried out during March and April 2015, with participant volunteers identified from the College's current staff and students, and the Trans community locally.

1.3 Bradford College

Bradford College is one of the largest FE Colleges in the UK, with over 23,000 students and 1320 FE staff and 230 Higher Education (HE) staff. The College, providing education and training in the city since 1832, delivers both an FE portfolio as well as an HE portfolio of courses providing learners with progression routes from pre-entry to post graduate study. A huge variety of courses are offered ranging from Entry Level to Post Graduate, including GSCEs to A-Levels, vocational qualifications and apprenticeships across a variety of subject areas.

Over 19,000 FE students and almost 4,000 HE students make up the cohort of learners, of whom, in the academic year 2012 /13 (Bradford College Strategy 2015 – 2020), 72% were drawn from Bradford and District and the main ethnicities were White 55%, Pakistani heritage 26%, all other ethnicities combined 19%. The age profiles of students recorded in the 2012/13 data show that approximately 25% of students were in the age group 16 – 19 years; 20% of students were in the age group 20 – 24 years; but the largest age group were 25 years plus and made up 52% of the student population.

The Government's Ofsted inspection report following a full inspection in September 2014 judged the College to be 'Good' with 'Outstanding' features. The David Hockney Building, the College's brand new, £50 million city centre campus, opened its doors to students in September 2014, and a state-of-the-art Advanced Technology Centre will be completed by September 2015, offering facilities in STEAM subjects for high-achieving learners.

The College has a thriving and award winning Students Union, one of only a small number in the UK which is active in both Further and Higher Education, which holds regular campaigns to promote diversity and inclusiveness, builds links with Trans Positive a community group working to promote and support Trans issues, and has an LGBT officer. The College has also achieved White Ribbon Status, has signed up to the 'No Bystanders' pledge and promotes equality, diversity, community cohesion and active citizenship in an FE and HE contact via its official Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/bcdiversityplus

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Why Trans Equality in Post School Education Matters

Trans or Transgender is an umbrella term which broadly speaking describes individual whose gender expression and / or gender identity differs from conventional expectations based on the physical sex they were born into.

The term 'trans' can be used without offence but only when used as an adjective, for example 'a trans student'. For the purposes of this report, the term 'trans' is used throughout as an umbrella term with the intention of including all individuals or groups who may have or have had gender dysphoria and have taken steps, are taking steps or are considering whether to take steps to resolve their gender dysphoria.

Current estimates put the number of those who are gender variant in the UK at around 1% (EHRC 2012). However, there is a lack of reliable data due to the fact that there is no current consistency nationally with regard to including Trans people in surveys, monitoring forms, research or the national census. Estimates are often based on the number of Trans people who have contact with Gender Identity Clinics, and given that not all Trans people undergo medical transition, and the estimates will not include those who are and gender questioning, then the number of Trans people in the UK is likely to be much higher (Brighton and Hove City Council, 2013).

Trans people are significantly more likely to have had to deal with stress, anxiety, fears, phobias and suicidal thoughts than non-Trans people, and can experience considerable feelings of isolation as a result of abuse and harassment (PHE 2015). Within this context, many Trans people return to learning in FE and HE settings, having left school early due to transphobic bullying, and prejudice and discrimination in the work place often leads to individuals considering education as places of tolerance and understanding.

A report by the National Union of Students (2014) indicates that of the estimated 28,000 students currently in Higher and Further Education, one third of Trans students report experienced bullying or harassment on campus, and half of sTrans students seriously consider dropping out of their course during their time in higher education.

2.2 Strategies

Research strategies for this project involved both qualitative and quantitative techniques which included focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and an on-line staff survey:

- A total of 30 participants engaged in Focus Group discussions, with a range of volunteer participants drawn from current students, staff, and members of Trans Positive, a local partner organisation;
- Individual interviews with volunteers in pairs were held to undertake a more in depth personal case study approach;
- On-line staff survey of all staff, which gained responses 141 (approximately 10% of the FE staff group) from both academic and non-academic staff from a diverse range of disciplines, with differing levels of experience and working in a range of different positions within the College. For a breakdown of on-line survey respondents by staff group, please see table 1 below:

College Staff Group	Percentage of respondents by staff group out of a total of 141
Leadership	4%
Support	54%
Teaching	38%
Project Manager, Security, Finance	3%
Temp / Agency	1%

Table 1: Percentage of on-line survey respondents by staff group

The research questions used in all strategies were designed specifically to consider the objectives of the research project, while cross-referencing with the framework for cultural analysis outlined in section 2.3 below.

2.3 Ethics

This research was designed and undertaken according to the key principles of ethical research outlined in The Framework for Research Ethics (FRE), published by the Economic and Social Research Council (2012).

Research participants were fully informed of: the purpose, methods and intended uses of the research data; how their confidentiality and anonymity would be fully respected and protected; all participants and respondents were self-selecting on a voluntary basis, and the process was led by an independent researcher.

In recognising that research has the potential to impact negatively on the contributors, the approaches taken were designed to ensure respect and sensibility to their lifeworld and avoidance of the possibility of approaching sensitive personal experiences by steering away from pursuing challenging personal data. The semi-structured questions were devised to inform the focus group and interview discussions but not to direct them, encouraging the groups to focus their sharing and debates on the topic areas which seemed most appropriate to them.

2.4 Cultural Web as a framework for analysis

Culture is viewed from a variety of perspectives, with authors and theorists promoting their own views and analyses according to where they place most emphasis.[1] Essentially though, the main consideration in respect of this research project is that culture is likely to drive strategy and hence it is desirable that culture can be effectively assessed, and that strategy and the dominate culture are in alignment (Johnson, Scholes and Whittington, 2011).

The research for this project has used the model of the 'Cultural Web' (Opcit) as a framework for analysing the culture of Bradford College in relation to its desire to provide a positive environment for Trans students and staff. The 'Cultural Web' describes six interrelated elements which constitute what Johnson and Scholes call the pattern or model of the work environment. By considering each element it is possible to begin to see the bigger picture of an organisation's culture. The six elements described are:

- **Stories**

The past events and stories people currently tell about your organisation, including the reputation communicated amongst your clients and other stakeholders.

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[1] Campbell, Stonehouse and Houston (2002: 53) describe culture as 'the feel of the organisation or its character' and cite a definition by Stacey, 1996:

> *'The culture of any group of people is that set of beliefs, customs, practices and ways of thinking that they have come to share with each other through being and working together. It is a set of assumptions people simply accept without questions as they interact with each other. At the visible level the culture of a group of people takes the form of ritual behaviour, symbols, stories, sounds and artefacts.'*

- **Rituals and Routines**

The daily behaviour and actions of people which provide signals as to what is acceptable behaviour. This determines what is expected to happen in given situations, and what is valued by management.

- **Symbols**

The visual representations of the organisation including logos, the design of the buildings, and the formal or informal dress codes.

- **Organisational Structure**

This includes both the structure defined by the organisation chart, and the unwritten lines of power and influence that indicate whose contributions are most valued.

- **Control Systems**

This relates to the different ways that the organisation is controlled. These include financial systems, quality systems, policies, procedures and rewards.

- **Power Structures**

The pockets of real power in the organisation, where the greatest amount of influence resides, impacting on decisions, operations and strategic direction, and underpinning the way that organisations are enacted.

The values of the College are made explicit in the 2015 – 2020 Strategic Plan, which expresses a commitment to equality and diversity, to providing an inclusive environment which is open, welcoming, supportive, and delivering an outstanding student experience.

The Cultural Web provides this research project with a useful tool to: identify, during this snapshot of time, the opportunity to evaluate how well the stated values are perceived to be embedded; the potential for those values to underpin a welcoming, supportive and inclusive learning environment to a potential and current Trans student population; and provide a configuration which can be used to make focussed recommendations for change and improvement.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 General experience of Bradford College staff respondents who have supported a Trans Student

Out of a total of 141 staff respondents to the on-line survey, 91% said that they didn't know if they had any experience of supporting a Trans student while only 13 respondents (9%) reported that they had knowingly supported a Trans student.

Of those who reported that they had experience of supporting Trans students, those staff gave an average rating of 5.6 out of 10 to the College for how well their own support needs were met during the process. These results are illustrated in chart 1 below:

Chart 1: How well does Bradford College meet staffs own needs while supporting a Trans student?

In addition, of the total number of respondents to the on-line survey, 58% reported that they had levels of awareness of the kinds of support available to Trans students at the College as being between some awareness and being fully aware; and 54% rated themselves as being moderately confident to highly confident at signposting a Trans student to gain the appropriate level of support should they need to. Chart 2 on page 13 however, illustrates the variance in reporting from within the different staff groups, which will be impacted by the differences in length of experience and roles undertaken.
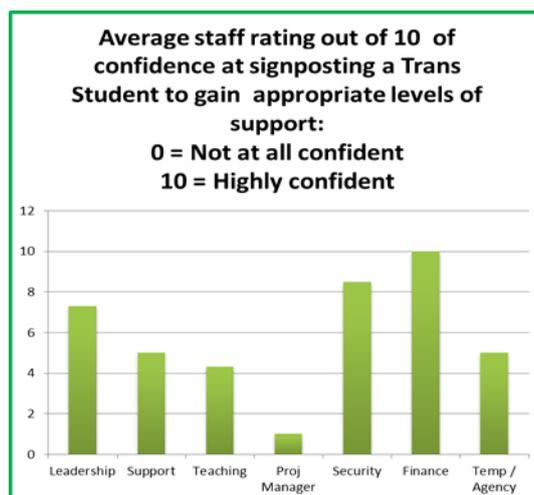
Chart 2: How confident are Bradford College staff at signposting a Trans student to gain the appropriate level of support should they need to?

The impact of these findings being that, if the survey results are representative of the whole of the Bradford College staff team, there is currently a significant majority of staff without any experience of supporting Trans students and 40% of staff with low to moderate levels of awareness of the support available to Trans students. This indicates that there is a significant gap in staff experience and knowledge which this project and the recommendations from this research seek to redress.

3.2 Stories, perceptions, feelings, first contact, initial impressions

Student expectations are formed by series of events, including word of mouth, past experience, personal need and what is communicated by the learning institution. Lancaster and Reynolds (2004: 409) suggest that customer perceptions are formed by 'moments of truth' which describe each episode when a customer comes into contact with any aspect of an organisation, and that a single negative experience and can negate the entire experience.

In response to the question: 'How well does Bradford College promote itself as a Trans positive college?', 51% of on-line survey respondents reported that they perceived the College as promoting itself either positively or very positively, while 49% reported the College as promoting itself either negatively, or neither negatively or positively. The results are illustrated in Chart 3 on page 14 which identifies the average rating by each respondent group:

Average rating out of 10 by staff group of the success or otherwise of Bradford College at promoting itself as Trans Positive College:
0 = Very negatively
4 to 6 = Neither negatively or positively
10 = Very positively
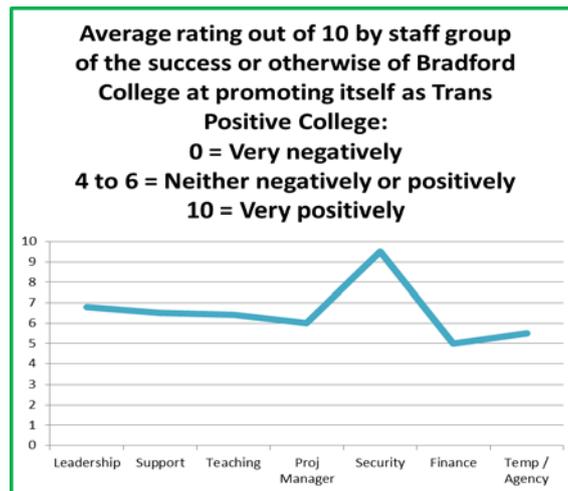
Chart 3: How well does Bradford College promote itself as a Trans positive college?

The college was perceived to be more Trans positive by internal observers than by external observers, a key consideration when making recommendations for minimising potential barriers for future students who are choosing where to study.

A greater awareness was demonstrated by internal observers and focus group participants of existing good practice e.g. LGBT training provided by the College and Trans specific talks which have been provided for student groups.

The College website was viewed by focus group participants as being less successful in promoting the college as Trans positive than it had the potential for, and concern was expressed that poor representation in promoted images and provision of information can leave potential Trans students feeling unwelcomed, and unlikely to be understood.

> *'There is limited visual declaration in the buildings or on the website of our commitment to being Trans positive'.*

Crucially, a perception was expressed however that there is a potential gap in understanding between corporate assumptions and the experiences of students, and that while the college provides a welcoming environment, there is nothing specific for Trans students within that. In this way, support for Trans students was seen to be more implied rather than specific.

3.3 Potential barriers for Trans Students

Respondents and participants were able to suggest a range of fears and barriers which could deter potential students from applying to study at the college, as well as general concerns around returning. These are listed below:

- Concerns relating to the lack of safe, quiet, private spaces, and that the public areas of the college buildings and grounds are the least safe.

- Fear that there will be no one in the college who Trans students will be able to approach for support and understanding.

- Fear of a lack of safe toileting facilities creates a major barrier for potential Trans students, or those questioning their identity.

- Fear of a lack of options on college application forms for potential students to describe themselves in any other gender than male or female.

- Fear of getting bullied.

- Fear of a lack of safe changing facilities where they are required for areas of study such as for catering, health and beauty, and which creates a sufficient barrier to prevent potential Trans students from applying.

- Students may experience confusion over their own current status, and or choose the time while at college as a safe place to transition. Hence the need for such students to choose their place of study where they can be confident of receiving appropriate support.

- Some potential students who have transitioned post 16 education may have school certificates and other forms of identification in a different name. This can be a frequent barrier where administrative staff do not know how find solutions and the individual has to make frequent and persistent requests with the resultant de-motivation and abandonment after a number of failed attempts.

The following are examples of quotes taken from numerous responses on the on-line survey:

'If a Trans student is feeling vulnerable then I imagine the idea of enrolling at any Institution must be terrifying. We have to ensure that we are proactive and visible in our messages rather than a student feeling like they have to seek out support.'

'We need to check the wording around gender on application forms and on the website so that we show we are genuinely understanding and happy to celebrate different gender identities.'

Particular local support issues which were also highlighted which included: concerns over a lack of protection for students walking to and from a city centre campus when students have reported occasionally experience targeting and harassment from members of the general public; and potential risks to Trans students from members of sub-cultural groups present within the College student cohort where it was perceived that some lack of positivity towards tolerance and diversity may reside. These issues are addressed in the recommendations in section 4.

3.4 Rituals and Routines

3.41 Daily behaviour and expectations

Celebration of diversity and the values of tolerance and anti-harassment are actively promoted by campaigning within the College, led by a pro-active Student Union and the College led movement Diversity Plus. The College web site contains an abundance of positive images and success stories involving a diverse range of students and volunteers. At the time of writing however, there were no obvious images of Trans students detectable on the website, and a search for 'Trans students' failed to produce any results.

Concerns were expressed by focus group participants that some of the large spaces within the college environment can feel intimidating and occasionally oppressive language can be heard. These concerns were supported by the results of the on-line staff survey (see Table 2 on page 17).

There is a need therefore for the College to make their policies for inclusivity more explicit and take further steps to promote zero tolerance for anyone disrespecting any members of the College community, emphasising that measures will be taken to stop all forms of harassment through informal and formal responses. In this atmosphere then any Trans

student or member of staff will have the best chance of being respected and the freedom to pursue their own goals and identities.

3.42 Safe places and gaining access to safe toilet and changing facilities

Even though there is active promotion of tolerance and diversity within the College campus and promoted via the Student Services pages on the College website, there was still a significant percentage of staff respondents to the on-line survey who rated key locations as being less than moderately safe: around 25 % of respondents rated the social areas and services areas as being less than moderately safe.

	Very Safe				Moderately Safe					Very Unsafe	
%age of respondents rating areas out of 10 for safety according to location	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Teaching Areas	21%	10%	17%	21%	7%	16%	5%	1%	2%	0%	1%
Social Areas	9%	5%	15%	15%	9%	22%	8%	9%	5%	1%	3%
Service Areas	11%	5%	17%	18%	9%	19%	9%	6%	4%	1%	2%

Table 2: Ratings out of 10 for perceptions of safety in different locations by respondents of on-line survey

These results provide a clear indication that there is further work to be done by the College to ensure that all of the members of its community can fully thrive in a warm and tolerant social environment.

One key issue raised in relation to safety for Trans members was the issue of gaining access to safe 'men-only' and 'women-only' areas according to the gender in which they present and who also have the option of choosing to access, gender neutral changing rooms and toilets. In the new DHB all of the toilets facilities are designed with cubicles which present a solution to some of these concerns, as it is not acceptable to restrict a Trans person to using disabled toilets or other unisex facilities[2]

More development work is required to provide solutions in the older buildings and where changing into uniforms or protective clothing is integral to a course of study e.g catering, hair and beauty, engineering.

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[2] Equality Challenge Unit: http://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/inclusive-environment/providing-support/trans-people/

3.43 Student support

There are a number of recent case studies of successful Trans students thriving and achieving their goals at Bradford College, and staff confidence is relatively high in respect of being able to signpost a Trans student for appropriate sources of support.

The results of the on-line survey however, indicate that only a small percentage of staff (7% of respondents) have had experience of supporting Trans students and as Trans student data is not currently collected, so much is unknown.

Raising awareness of all staff of the services which exist to support Trans members of the College community, through training and the development of a Trans student Policy and Guidance document, which is also available for current and potential students via the College website, will be a major step forward for the College, which the 'Towards a Trans Positive Culture' project is designed to address.

3.5 Symbols

There are a range of positive images around the college, particularly in the new David Hockney Building (DHB), for example, the Rainbow Flag which symbolises LGBT pride and solidarity and was designed and produced in the College by staff and students, and a range of other posters and declarations. Research participants called for more of the same with a focus on Trans positive messages and for them to be distributed around the range of College sites.

The DHB creates a large open plan contemporary interior space and lends itself well to the use of projected imagery and messages which would have the potential for countering some of the perceived intimidation on the ground floor where large groups are able to congregate.

An Internal Marketing strategy designed to promote the values made explicit by the 2015 – 2020 Bradford College Strategy would support both internal and external promotion of the College as a destination for all, while positively embedding the Trans community as part of everyday student life.

3.6 Organisational structure

Bradford College's organisational structures are aligned in their support for the core values and strategic objectives outlined in the 2015 – 2020 Strategy, including: 'placing people and communities at the centre of our values', and 'delivering and outstanding student experience'.

Research participants recommended that these aims are assisted by making a range of Trans resources to be available on Moodle for staff and existing Trans and potential Trans students, and supported on the staff intranet by a list of staff who are able to taken on a lead for Trans support issues to whom staff can refer and or confer for guidance and support.

3.7 Control Systems

3.71 Policies and procedures

Student support policies such as Safeguarding and Anti-Harassment are easily accessible via the College website, in addition to a comprehensive range of advice around personal safety, access to 24 hour security, navigating around the city and so on. The Student Services team and Student Union are promoted on the website main page as well as information on Student Welfare, face to face counselling, the Speak out Campaign working with Bradford Hate Crime Alliance and the availability of quiet rooms within the College.

The addition of the planned Trans Gender Policy and Procedure to be produced as part of this development project, will spell out the standards of support and protection which will be afforded to Trans students. In turn, with the policy being made accessible from the College web site and internal and external intra net and internet searches, current and potential Trans students will be able to clearly see what support and level of commitment they can expect from the College.

3.72 Student monitoring

Colleges and other places of Higher Education are generally perceived as more liberal environments where members of the LGBT community can find space in their lives, away from family and school peers, to develop an adult identity (Valentine, Wood, Plummer, 2009).

As the College is currently not collating Trans student data, however, it is impossible to be able to fully demonstrate that Trans learners are thriving and achieving their education and personal goals; and support procedures are difficult to evaluate without focussed feedback processes. While collecting data on gender identity and sexual orientation is controversial and not without challenges, research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2012) demonstrates that it is feasible, and guidance provided by the National Union of Students (2014) provides guidance in taking forward data gathering in an inclusive and sensitive way.

3.73 Staff training and student induction

As indicated in the findings outlined in section 3.1, there is a need to devise and implement focussed training for staff. An outcome already identified within the second stage of this research project. Focus group discussions also consistently raised concerns regarding some lack of awareness within the student population and made detailed recommendations to boost student induction policy and practice. For details please refer to recommendations in section 4.9

3.8 Power Structures

Focus group discussions concluded that there is a perception of there being a lack of specific representation for LGBT voices at senior management and governance level, and the recommendations to consider this are included in section 4.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations collated from the interviews, focus groups and on-line survey have been organised into the six elements of the Cultural Web and are summarised in the following pages.

Stories

Recommendations
4.1 Management of initial impressions and the quality of first contact experience
- Inclusive ethos is promoted through images (posters, power point displays projected onto large white walls in the David Hockney Building (DHB), increased use of positive Trans and Diversity imagery in prominent positions throughout the College site.   - Dedicated support for Trans students promoted through advertising on the Bradford College website, in student literature / information packs, on reception counters.   - Reception and Student Information Desk (SID) Office staff trained to be both observant and aware of triggers so that they can direct potential Trans students to appropriately trained and issue sensitive staff.   - All reception, caretaking, security and catering staff receive training to be welcoming and skilled in providing a supportive response: to learn confidence on first contact to ask how Trans students would like to be addressed, how to approach the issues of gender and title, and how not to guess and use the wrong name.   - All application processes reviewed and where necessary revised to ensure they are sufficiently inclusive for potential applicants with Trans support needs as well as all other characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010, including:

- providing individual applicants with the opportunity to record their own gender identity and preferred personal pronouns, in addition or in replace of the regular

  binary options;
- include a question: 'do you identify with your birth gender' in order that offers of support can be triggered and pro-active;
- language use is evaluated and revised if necessary to ensure that course booklets / descriptions are written in gender neutral terms.

Rituals and Routines

Recommendations

4.2 Implement a clear expectation that positive and inclusive values are to be consistently demonstrated throughout the student experience by all

- All students to be required to sign up to a commitment to demonstrate acceptance, tolerance, respect, empathy and understanding to all students and staff. This could take the form of a student charter, but is signed up to at the commencement of studies eg during the first class of the course as part of student induction.

- Targeted campaigns to be undertaken, on a rolling programme throughout the academic year, relating to the promotion of tolerance towards others and zero-tolerance of harassment in social areas and non-managed spaces around the approaches to the college.

- Enhanced awareness created in all students through material included in lessons and where possible having Trans speakers in to educate students during induction. Keys skills sessions for students to include Trans support issues.

- Staff induction to include awareness of support structures for Trans students.

4.3 Provide safe places, gender neutral facilities and access to 'men only' and 'women only' areas as appropriate

- Safe zone(s) to be provided by LGBT Community Support Group. Befriending options to be available for all new students and provided on a voluntary basis by other students.

- Gender neutral toilets are provided on each floor of the different college buildings, or partial solutions are negotiated according to resources and current provision. Access negotiated and agreed for safe access to 'men only' and 'women only' areas as chosen according to individual circumstances and need.

- Appropriate and safe changing facilities to be provided for Trans students.

- Security in the immediate outside areas of the college enhanced, with clear guidance and support provided for staff to challenge any inappropriate behaviour in social areas. An on-site community support officer to provide security and support.

- Trans Society established for students and friends, and links maintained with Community Support Groups.

- Volunteer buddying / mentor system set up to be offered for all new students to combat isolation and support the development of a social network of Trans allies.

Symbols

Recommendations
4.4 Enhance current marketing strategies to include a deliberate and co-ordinated approach to communicate the College's values and ensure that the support for Trans students is more explicit
- Images on the first page of the web-site to have more impact on creating essential messages, with further work needed to explain the support available eg LGBT friendly logos, images and sign-posting and web links to resources and information.   - Enhance the use of marketing techniques internally to promote the values of the College, sell its intentions around inclusiveness and celebration of diversity, and to market staff and student training, and Trans student policies, resources and support networks.   - Expand on existing customer care strategies e.g internal student satisfaction surveys to seek feedback on perceptions and experience to assess whether: support was available when it is needed; was it co-ordinated or slow and unresponsive; were issues addressed satisfactorily; was support empathic and individualised; were staff and students skilled and courteous in showing understanding to each other? Use feedback where possible to improve and achieve continuous improvement.

Organisational Structure

Recommendations

4.5 Clear support is in place for Trans students which is well communicated and easily accessible, including a range of resources for self-help

- Trans Students Policy and Guidance document produced for staff and students, and made available to all via the website. Guidance to include a range of recommendations on how to support individual students who may be questioning or undergoing some degree of transitioning, and provide a comprehensive list of support best practice. Policy to include requirement for named mentor(s), checklists and flow charts so that all parties can review progress and manage expectations.

- Easily accessible point of contact and or support is made available and communicated to all students, possibly taking the form a Trans help line.

- Range of resources made available to students around Trans issues eg electronic resources, Moodle, links on college website eg student services web page.

- Student Services and Student Union Web pages to be easy to find, with links on the front page of the College website.

- Trans information, resources and support systems, including the provision of face to face counselling, to be promoted and consistently available eg web links to equality issues from College web pages.

- Lead administrative, teaching and or support staff designated by the College who will have a particular responsibility to retain an updated knowledge on Trans support issues, and who can then provide in-college expertise for others around obtaining gender recognition certificates, updating educational certificates and problem-solving around any other barriers as they present themselves.

- Staff intranet to provide list of lead staff to refer students to for Trans support issues, eg Trans Champions, resources, other staff to link up with for support.

Control Systems

Recommendations

4.6 Implement processes to ensure that all curriculum development is Trans sensitive, Trans student progress can be effectively monitored and standardised procedures are introduced for providing support and mentoring for Trans students.

- Data collection processes are refined to ensure that student data enables the College to track and monitor the progress of Trans students.

- Future curriculum development to include impact assessment to assure for Trans sensitivity.

- Guidance and Policy Document produced for staff and students outlining the College's clear philosophy and approach to supporting Trans students in the College, and make the document available on-line via google search as well as internal search engines. Refer to section 4.4

4.7 Produce a range of Trans focussed learning solutions for staff and students to enhance existing knowledge and understanding, and engender mind-set change where needed

- Induction video to be produced for staff and students to support introduction to the college environment, where support is available, to provide equality messages and emphasise the College values.

- Induction checklist for students to include awareness raising for Trans issues, full coverage of support and inclusiveness for all students, as well as other diversity related

  issues such as making individuals aware of offensive language and helping others to understand what it means to be targeted.

- Induction checklist to be shared with all students, including part time students, so that they are aware of the range of information which is intended for them. Enables students to be empowered in their own inductions and to manage their own information needs, or seek out information where they missed the induction procedures or they were curtailed for other reasons. Students to understand college rules and procedures.

- Better resources to be developed for standardised Equality and Diversity tutorials to enable students to have the opportunity to openly discuss issues and to address the intersection between faith, beliefs and individual's rights to be treated with respect and acceptance.

- Future equality staff training to include annual training on Trans Awareness:
  - understanding language and terms;
  - understanding issues and barriers facing Trans people generally and Trans students specifically e.g. understanding some of the challenges related to gender dysphoria, fears and potential barriers of being a student in FE and HE, an awareness of potential forms of Transphobia and confidence in how to address them in line with College policy and guidance;
  - understanding legal and confidentiality obligations;

- managing milestones e.g first contact, recognising and responding to 'triggers', responding to disclosure;
- mentoring a Trans student;
- managing communication and briefings on tutorial resources;

Other equality issues to be included:

- awareness raising of students who may be experiencing identity issues for a wide range of reasons eg Trans, International Students who are struggling to feel accepted;

- 'Talking Heads' video produced as a resource for staff and students (training and induction) with individuals volunteering to share their experiences on camera.

Power Structures

Recommendations
4.8 Establish representation at senior and or governance level within the College structure to ensure continuing influence in decision-making
 • Establish a Trans Fellowship of the College • Develop Trans / LGBT representation at Governance level.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Bradford College is one of the largest of its kind in the UK, providing a combined Further Education and Higher Education portfolio of courses from Entry level to Post Graduate study, including vocational qualifications and apprenticeships. The College provides learning experience to over 23,000 students who are supported by around 1320 FE staff and 230 HE staff. This research was commissioned in the context of the College's desire to take positive action to move forward its inclusion agenda, and build on its capacity to deliver excellent learning experiences to the Colleges' current and future Trans student communities.

This research was conducted as the first stage of a two stage development project and designed to: provide a particular focus on evaluating the progress of the College to date in strengthening its intention to provide a welcoming and supportive environment to Trans students and staff; gain perceptions of the College from existing Trans students and from the Trans community locally; identify barriers and specific support needs for Trans people in a Further Education setting and within Bradford College specifically; and assess training needs for staff and students.

Data gathering was undertaken during March and April 2015, with participant volunteers identified from the College's current staff and students, and the community support group Trans Positive.

Summary of main findings

Research participants confirmed that the College provides a generally warm, welcoming and inclusive learning environment with active campaigning by the Student Union to promote and celebrate diversity, while making significant contributions to a range of equality agendas such as working to highlight the need to reduce bullying by signing up to the No Bystanders pledge, achieving White Ribbon status (men working to end violence against women), and highlighting the need to reduce homelessness in the City of Bradford.

However, a number of perception gaps were identified; with staff respondents divided in their ratings of how well the College promotes itself as a Trans Positive

College, and how safe the different areas of the College environment are perceived to be. In addition, the internal respondents rated the College as being more Trans positive than the external respondents due in part to less visible promotion by the College of the internal good practice and campaigning, and the need to provide a specific focus to meet the needs of the Trans people.

The online staff survey also identified relatively low levels of awareness of Trans issues and experience of supporting Trans students, with the need for clear pathways of support outlined in a detailed Trans Student Policy and Guidance document, under-pinned by support structures for both staff and students. All of which stage two of this development project is designed to address.

Summary of main recommendations

Bradford College to:

- Develop an on-going focus on the particular needs of the Trans community, while remaining part of the LGBT Community; it being essential to retain a separate agenda due to the potential levels of vulnerability, a significant need to raise awareness of the issues faced by the Trans community and to make active steps to provide the right first contact support and welcoming environment.
- All students and staff are given insight into the problems and challenges of being Trans through a range of blended learning strategies, to increase awareness of what members of the Trans community can be faced with on a daily basis so they can be more understanding and supportive, be in a strong position to provide mentoring and guidance, or volunteer for a befriending / buddying system as appropriate.
- All students to be supported to understand College expectations of behaviour and student responsibilities towards Equal Opportunities and Diversity while on campus.
- Promotion and maintenance of safe places by Bradford College.
- Policy and Guidance Document to be developed to facilitate support for students who are questioning their gender identify or are in need of assistance with transitioning will be empowered by having access to a range of easily accessed information and mentoring.
- Clear pathways of support for Trans students are promoted and well understood by those providing and those in need of support and the requirement for regular planned reviews to evaluate their progress during their student journey through college.

- Provision of support from Student Services to be better promoted and easier to locate on the website for potential students.
- An approach is developed to co-ordinate external and internal marketing strategies to further enhance the communication of the College's values.

Further work

Student experience is subjective and satisfaction depends on the perceptions of the student, which in turn may be influenced by: how well they progress with their studies and personal goals; their expectations based on prior experience, as well as the gap between expectations of the College as a safe place to study and their experience in reality.

Throughout this research there was an Inability to fully triangulate the findings with student experience due to the lack of ability to differentiate feedback between Trans student experiences and non-Trans student experiences.

Lack of significant comparable data at this point, on the progression of Trans students within the College, resulted in the discussions and debates being reliant on existing staff and students of the College speaking on behalf of current and future Trans students, and a partner interest group with members sharing their experience of studying at other institutions.

However, valuable data was produced for this research, and provided with great willingness, insight and empathy. This will be further enhanced qualitatively once the recommendations are implemented and followed up with customer care feedback strategies to gain student and staff insight on issues relating to the College's progression towards its goal of a Trans Positive Culture.

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