

## **Access and Participation Statement – Highbury College, Portsmouth**

Highbury College is committed to meeting local and regional needs to widen participation in Higher Education (HE) by under-represented groups. We acknowledge that increasing access to HE is particularly important given that the percentage of the population with higher level qualifications (Level 4 or above) in Portsmouth and the surrounding area is below the national average and this contributes to skills gaps within the local and regional economies.

In particular, the College is committed to increasing progression to higher education amongst those who live in areas of low participation and areas of deprivation. This is particularly important for the College because it serves a community, which includes districts where participation is amongst the lowest in the UK. (POLAR four data) and where there are neighbourhoods of deprivation that are in the bottom 10% of all areas in the U.K. Currently 11% of our higher education students come from the four most deprived wards in Portsmouth.

The College's strategies and policies set out clearly our commitment to fair access, including the minimising of barriers for applicants. In addition to setting transparent criteria for entry to programmes, the College welcomes applications from students with non-traditional backgrounds and values work related experience.

As part of the admissions process, the College provides comprehensive information, advice and guidance (IAG). The admissions process is overseen by the Admissions Co-ordinator, who manages a team of centralised and qualified IAG workers. The Managing Director of Student Central manages the Admissions Co-ordinator, Career and Progression Co-ordinator, and the Head of Learning Support to ensure a cohesive approach to admissions through consideration of students' prior achievement and experience, career aspirations, and individual learning and welfare needs. The majority of prospective HE students are interviewed to assess their suitability for higher level studies and the chosen programme of study as well as to identify students' support needs, including study skills support.

The College actively encourages applications from disadvantaged groups and closely monitors recruitment and enrolment from these groups as well as achievement rates. Data on performance for equality and diversity indicators are reported to the College's Equality and Diversity Committee, the College Leadership Team and the Corporation.

Highbury College engages in outreach work to engage disadvantaged and under-represented groups in education and training, including participation in Higher Education (HE). We have developed the University Academy to encourage young people in particular, and their parents, carers or guardians, to consider HE as a progression route. We also intend to focus on developing our existing and prospective students' study skills to provide the firm grounding needed for success. We work with schools, community groups and employers to raise awareness of the benefits of HE to individuals, industry and the local economy. A recent development has been our involvement with the Solent Universities Network, one of 29 partnerships of universities and colleges, which deliver out-reach programmes to young people living in low participation postcode areas.

Specific examples of activities undertaken by the College to widen access to HE include:

- Promoting progression to HE for the College's Level 2 and Level 3 students through targeted careers sessions, an annual College based HE Fair, visits to and talks by universities and support with UCAS applications
- The appointment of a SUN Progression Mentor to encourage College students from targeted post code areas to consider all types of higher education, including Apprenticeships at level 4 and above. The post holder works with 333 of our students who are from low participation areas.
- Providing study skills support on Level 3 and HE programmes through online resources, tutorials, and specific sessions
- Well established Access to HE programmes which provide opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and levels of education to progress to university level study. This now includes an on line Access programme for those unable to attend timetabled lessons.
- Learning and development programmes which provide support to teachers on developing teaching and learning strategies that meet the needs of individual students.
- Working closely with schools and colleges to raise aspirations and promote lifelong learning, targeting progression to HE courses and attending school careers events to promote advice and guidance on progression opportunities and offer careers advice.

For 2019/20, the College will continue welcome and encourage higher education applicants from areas of deprivation and low participation.

1 August 2019