

Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (BEDI) Impact Report

2023-24

RNCM
ROYAL NORTHERN
COLLEGE of MUSIC

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Executive Summary

Welcome to the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) annual Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (BEDI) Impact Report.

The report includes equality-related data we have gathered over the last year and demonstrates our compliance with the requirement to publish relevant equality information. We have pulled together highlights from the year under the headings of our three Supporting Strategies (Artistic, Education and Research), as well as progressing our staff objectives, led by Human Resources. The report also includes a summary of our Equity Fundraising activities.

The report provides a holistic overview of our progress in meeting our BEDI Objectives and enables us to consider what further steps are might be necessary. This year the RNCM has successfully delivered:

- 'Julia Perry' Week on the centenary of Julia's Birth. Julia was an American classical composer, who combined her classical training with her African- American heritage. The RNCM celebrated her music across college with a series of concerts, lectures, competition, 'flash mob' choir, masterclasses, library resources and research forums in March 24. This model of celebrating 'Underrepresented' music/ musicians and engaging the whole college in discovery and discourse has proven to be an excellent model for engaging with diverse music and musicians in a variety of different ways.
- Activities focussed on raising awareness of Neurodiversity within college. This has resulted in training for staff across college and an art installation of umbrellas, the symbol of the ADHD Foundation, demonstrating our commitment to the Foundation via a donation.
- RNCM Disability Week took place in January 2024 and included a programme of music in memory of our graduate, Lucy Hale. Lucy was a successful composer, who sadly passed away in 2021 and had a passion for music and disability rights. The public events exclusively featured artists who are deaf, disabled or neurodivergent and events included Research Forums, RNCM Opera Scenes with BSL Interpretation, workshops and student led performances. It also included a 'Lunch and Learn' hosted by our Human Resources team, providing advice on the support available to staff and managers.
- The first year of the RNCM Engage West Cumbria programme has focused on establishing the needs of local West Cumbria schools and communities, by confirming and building on knowledge identified through the Cumbria Music Hub's needs analysis and testing methods of musical engagement. As a result, taster sessions in schools and brass bands have taken place, focussing on detailed partnership development. After one year of Research and Development we have already seen young people's musical aspirations being raised and the reinforcement of musical activity in schools and communities where a number of challenges were identified. Importantly, trust and engagement from schools and children in West Cumbria has been established, providing a firm base to build up the programme in future years.
- A commitment to removing barriers from people with 'Protected Characteristics', as defined by the Equality Act, through a range of events and workshops, examples of which include a well-attended bystander training, Pride events in June 2024 and participating in Manchester Pride in August 2024, as well as an internal review by our Internal Auditors (UNIAC) of our Wellbeing Hub, in its 3rd year of operation. This was also enhanced through introduction of the 'Workplace Adjustment Plans' for staff, which mirror 'Personal Learning Plans' for students.
- A new Access and Participation Plan (APP), which was submitted to our regulator, the Office for Students and focuses on supporting applicants and students who are Neurodivergent, due to increasing numbers of student disclosures over the last four years.
- A diverse range of music-making via our venue hires, including 'The Great Muslim Panto', Confucius Institute Chinese New Year Gala for Schools', 'Shock Out Arts – College of Professional Dance, Street and Hip Hop, and Musical Theatre', 'Rumi Revival – Sufie music, dance and poetry' and 'Alim Qasimov – Azerbaijani Mugham'.
- The RNCM Staff Wellbeing activity has continued to provide a focus for support across College by establishing a 'Wellbeing calendar' of events, meeting regularly as a group of

College-wide representatives and overseeing a range of resource development and events, often including the Students' Union and students together.

The Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (BEDI) Project Fund was available again in 23/24 but unfortunately received fewer applications, this was reviewed and the timeframes amended accordingly, to encourage more applications. However, two projects were funded: Empower 2024, celebrating women musicians on International Women's Day and FINTA, a student ensemble bringing together Female, Intersex, Non-Binary, Trans and A Gendered musicians, playing underrepresented music.

The Report also contains a reminder of the College's legal obligations as part of its Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of internal policies and the delivery of services, and for progress to be monitored. The new monitoring model, ensures a more joined-up and strategically-led approach.

The remainder of the report will summarise the activity in each strategic area, against the objectives, as set out in the three supporting strategies, overseen by the BEDI Forum. Overall, I am pleased to report that we continue to make positive progress around BEDI as we enter the 2024/2025 academic year.

Focus for 2024/25

Sexual Misconduct Education Programme for Staff and Students

Focussing on prevention and education in 2024/25, this work will be further highlighted as the appropriate handling of sexual misconduct becomes a condition of registration with the OFS from 1st August 2024. Interactive workshops on Consent are planned for Welcome Week 2025, delivered by an external supplier and the relaunch of RNCM RAISE IT, will enable our community to raise issues relating to harassment, which may have previously gone unreported. The transparent reporting, together with a focus on training and awareness raising on sexual harassment will ensure a respectful working environment for staff, students and visitors. In parallel, HR will run the successful 'Responding to Disclosures' training and focus on support for managers in dealing with accusations, whilst supporting a campaign on highlighting and discouraging unacceptable conduct. New students in 2024 received a Welcome Week presentation on expectations around conduct, consent and RNCM Values.

Neurodiversity

The Neurodiversity training provided to staff has always been well received. Contextually, we are seeing disclosures from staff and students increasing in number, year on year, and the College is committed to supporting the individuals involved. The HR team has committed to training and to the roll out of the new 'Workplace Adjustment Plans' for staff. The new Access and Participation Plan is focussed on support for Neurodivergent undergraduate students. The RNCM will be participating in Neurodiversity Celebration Week in March 2025.



Emma Hilton Wood

Academic Registrar and Chair of the Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Forum

1. Introduction

1.1 Strategic Led Approach to Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the RNCM

The Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Forum (BEDIF) is the College's principal vehicle for driving innovation and consulting on equity and diversity matters, including responsibility for developing equitable and diversity-related policies, procedures and guidance. The monitoring by BEDIF is strategically led, by a member of the Executive Committee and will ensure that the College continues to meet the legislative requirements and foster a tolerant, inclusive working and learning environment.

The Executive Summary to this report sets out the strategic approach which has been taken for the oversight of the three supporting strategies and HR progress against its BEDI objectives. The following sections provide an overview of the strategic activity in 23/24, provided by the Deputy Principal (Performance and Programmes) for the Artistic Supporting Strategy, Director of Programmes for the Education Supporting Strategy, Director of Research for the Research Supporting Strategy, Director of Development for Development and Equity Fundraising Activity and Head of Human Resources outlining progress on the HR Objectives.

1.2 Strategically Led Approach to BEDI

1.2.1 Artistic Supporting Strategy

Across the 2023.24 academic year, we continued to develop the five underpinning pillars of the public performance programme – student voice, diverse collaboration, lab, public / community engagement and professionalism – the first four of which link particularly closely with the BEDI agenda. The student-led Spotlights programme, in particular, gave an impressive overview and enabled the breadth and diversity of student ideas to be showcased throughout the year.

The *Future is Green* theme, exploring the question of the role of musicians in relation to the climate agenda, provided an opportunity to explore this agenda in depth, while opening up new and diverse collaborations with a range of different invited guests, including a poet and young activist, and organisations including Manchester Museum (as part of its WILD exhibition).



We continued to build on the diverse guests (as role models) invited to collaborate with students, which included Jasdeep Singh Degun's first year as the RNCM's Innovate Fellow, exploring collaboration outside the Western tradition, and focuses on the music of Cassandra Miller, Julia Perry and Helen Grime.

Disability week continued once again, with a BSL interpretation of Opera Scenes, performances of new works for accessible instruments in collaboration with Drake Music and a collaboration with FormidAbility, the world's first opera company putting accessibility at the foundation of the creative process.

The RNCM's Creative Engagement work, bringing students closer to our very diverse local community in central Manchester, has become a central part of student training, and is now focussed on five key projects – Children's Opera, Explore@RNCM, Community Chorus, Family Day and Young Explorers' concerts – bringing a much broader range of our community into the building. A new formal partnership agreement with the Olympias Music Foundation has further extended our ambitions to link more closely with our diverse local community.



'When we are in the RNCM facilities, we can breathe an air of tranquillity and harmony, which helps us feel comfortable, safe and calm. And in these times where life is so accelerated for everyone, that kind of calm is greatly appreciated.' - Parent of Olympias/ RNCM partnership.

Wrapped around all our student activity we continued to bring in a very diverse range of performances through our hires' programme featuring Azerbaijani mugham, Muslim panto, Sufi music, and a celebration of Chinese new year, amongst a wide range of musical genres.

1.2.2 Education Supporting Strategy

During 2023/24, work has continued to embed BEDI within programmes of study. As presented at the BEDI forum on 29th February 2023, BEDI is embedded within the Education Strategy in three different ways: through the curriculum, through our pedagogy, and through our strategic approach.

Within the curriculum, students are continuing to explore under-represented composers and critique repertoire through both academic studies modules and their own explorations of repertoire within principal study. There was a noticeable rise of under-represented composers in recital programmes, which was picked up through the moderating process. As part of the

Graduate School revalidation a new elective module called 'Underrepresented' was validated. This module has been launched in 2024/25 and has attracted students from across all postgraduate taught programmes, including the newly launched Master of Education. In addition to specific modules focusing on particular areas of BEDI such as Underrepresented artists, BEDI is embedded throughout the curriculum in key areas such as education and pedagogy modules and music in context. Work has been done to align education modules, ahead of the launch of the Master of Education programme, and to take a unified approach to inclusive pedagogy. Our education modules are popular amongst undergraduates and postgraduates alike, and focusing our curriculum on how to teach inclusively means that a large number of students each year are specifically studying issues of inclusion within music education.

Within our pedagogy, our BEDI focus has filtered through academic staff development activities. As part of our AdvanceHE Fellowship Scheme, participants engage in a workshop specifically exploring inclusive pedagogy. This is fundamental to meet the UK Professional Standards Framework. The theme for the annual Learning and Teaching Conference held in June 2023 was 'Belonging'. Colleagues were invited to propose a 'Lightening Talk' (quick and insightful) to explore how they build belonging through their teaching. Following a keynote by the Director of Programmes on the Centrality of Belonging, the conference programme comprised nine talks from across the institution; principal study, academic studies, and junior programmes, and grouped into three themes: Connections, Communities, and Strategies. Colleagues were invited to apply for a Teaching Award Scheme for a project related to their talk, and two awards have been made for projects that focus on building belonging in principal study.



The major piece of strategic work during 2023/24 was the development of a new Access and Participation Plan. The strategic approach to align learning and teaching with access and participation has been continuing throughout the lifecycle of the current Education Strategy. The first part of this work was to embed student health and wellbeing into academic operations through the Education Strategy. Similarly, the Engage Strategy for widening participation was also embedded into the Education Strategy. This has enabled the bringing together of student health and wellbeing and access and participation into the learning and teaching process of the College. In 2023/24, the collaborative work of all those involved in the processes mapped through the Student Support Framework resulted in a positive impact for students. In analysing attainment data as part of the access and participation project, there were no patterns related to different characteristics such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability (other than neurodivergence and mental health) or gender seen. The analysis did identify that those students with neurodivergence and mental health conditions performed slightly less well than their peers.

without these characteristics in first, second and to some extent third year. However, there were no patterns in degree outcomes that would lead us to believe that these students were disadvantaged in their final year. This suggests that the support given as students progress through their degree programmes helps to ensure equality of opportunity in degree outcomes. The focus of the access and participation plan is therefore to ensure that support is in place for those students with a neurodivergence and/or mental health conditions from year one onwards.

The Education Strategy is monitored each year by Education and Quality Committee. An action plan enables the committee to highlight strategic priorities for the following year. In light of the new Access and Participation Plan, the Education Strategy was reviewed by Academic Board to ensure that it still meets the aims and objects for access and participation. The review highlighted that Aim 6 – Widen Participation - still serves to meet the access objectives and targets in the new Access and Participation Plan. However, it was proposed that two additional objectives are added to the Education Strategy under Aim 4 – Support Student Health and Wellbeing - to support the on course objectives and targets in the new Access and Participation Plan. These will be the focus of work in 2024/25.

1.2.3 Research Supporting Strategy

Belonging, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (BEDI) is embedded into the framework of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2021–2026, reflecting the institution's broader commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive environment. We have made excellent progress in enhancing these ideals in practice through revisions to our policies and processes, the continuous monitoring and improvement of our inclusive and collaborative research environment, and individual research and knowledge exchange projects.

Promoting Diversity in Research and Knowledge Exchange

The RKE Strategy highlights the importance of promoting diversity in opinions and voices and seeks to engage diverse communities through knowledge exchange activities. Research activity encompasses projects driven by a diverse pool of partitioners far beyond staff with 'significant responsibility for research' (to use the Research Excellence Framework terminology) so as to foster an inclusive research environment and diverse outputs.

Examples include:

- The National Lottery Heritage Fund supported recording digitisation, enabling oral histories research as well as extensive community engagement. This has provided momentum for significant research into the accessibility, sustainability, and curation of our instrument collections (work ongoing), an initiative that is co-led by the Director of Research and the College Archivist and has resulted in external grant applications. Work also benefits regional organisations such as Manchester Histories.
- Extensive local and regional community engagement around air quality, breathing, and young people's health addressed through the application of new technology and artistic practice in collaboration with a regional SME.
- Expanding the pool of under-represented researchers at PGR level in line with North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (NWCDTP) policies (which we actively contributed to shaping); continuous monitoring of PGR feedback with particular attention to that from global majority or neurodiverse applicants and students.
- Supporting the continued research that underpins RNCM's initiatives to engage young people and under-served communities such as the Engage programme through research time, financial support for conferences and other sharing platform, and publication subvention as applicable.
- Encouraging projects on under-represented composers and performers and providing ongoing support for researchers working in these areas to develop their efforts along multiple public outputs across performances, digital platform materials, and articles to monographs.

Inclusive Research Environment

The strategy actively supports an inclusive research environment. We have reviewed traditional platforms for disseminating research, such as the Research Forum, and established this in a new format that adds greater opportunity for peer support at various stages of research-in-progress. We have also broadened the offering of reading groups focussed on particular topics and disciplinary areas which are open to all staff and students, and we have introduced new 'topic' discussion sessions (topics suggested by staff and students) to engage in cutting edge research beyond RNCM and allow this to reflect on internal developments, projects, and future planning. These complement PGR training sessions which are open to all. Topics for 2024 include 'Decolonisation and Anti-Racist Practice' as well as a critical look at the meaning and use of the term 'under-represented'. These sessions are open to all staff and those not currently identifying as 'research-active' (including professional services colleagues) have been approached with invitations to participate. Through our live streaming and hybrid meeting practices, we are hoping to facilitate access for those with caring responsibilities and other parameters that otherwise preclude them from on-site engagement, particularly in the late afternoon.



Supporting Access to Research and Knowledge Exchange activity through policies and processes

In 2023-2024, we reviewed a number of policies and processes including the Research Leave Policy; the Research Activity Reviews; application and decision-making processes for the Internal Research Fund and for RKE activity organisation and support. Work on these was driven by the over-riding goal to ensure equitable access to college resources through improved access and transparency so as to attract a broader pool of applications for a wider range of projects. Embedding a new Research Management System during 2024-2025 will significantly improve visibility of the RNCM's range of activities and foster collaborations internally and externally.

1.2.4 Human Resources BEDI Objectives (including Staff Survey overview)

The Human Resources team delivered and was responsible for equality interventions during 2023/24 academic year. These were delivered in response to identified need and in support of the College's strategic aims.

2023 Staff Survey

Work continued in relation to staff feedback on equality related themes from the staff engagement survey. There were five equality related questions as part of the staff engagement survey and overall the results were that 71% responded favourably, 22% neutral and 8% not favourably.

- 83% agreed that individual differences are respected at the College
- 81% agreed they can be their true self at work

HR worked alongside line managers during 2023/24 in discussions and consultation with their staff to create action plans to address equality related themes.

Active Bystander training, 'Lunch and Learn' and Online Learning

The aim of this training was to help staff across College to challenge poor behaviours which may have become normalised over time. It included self-coaching techniques to help staff respond appropriately and give them confidence, when they are faced with a challenging situation—and to give them strategies to use to make sure their voice is heard if they wanted to raise a concern. By working together, the aim of this training is to create a safe and supportive working environment across the College.



During 2023/24 HR introduced a series of 'lunch and learn' sessions on a variety of themes to meet staff training needs. These included;

- LGBTQ+ Allyship
- Wellbeing and avoiding burnout
- Managing reasonable adjustments

Online training continued to be delivered across all staff groups during 2023/24.

- Dignity at work
- Resilience
- Supporting mental health at work
- Unconscious bias
- Implementing reasonable adjustments
- Equality and Diversity briefing

Disability Awareness Week and Neurodiversity Awareness Training

Information, including signposting to resources, was shared with staff by email throughout the week on topics such as Hidden Disabilities, Access to Work and Personal Workplace Adjustment Plans. A Lunch & Learn was held to discuss disability awareness and managing reasonable adjustments.

Delivered by the ADHD Foundation, tailored training aimed to give managers a greater understanding of Neurodiversity and best practice strategies for working with neurodivergent staff within teams. In addition to the training the ADHD foundation have lots of short webinars, booklets and other materials on their website which were signposted to staff.

Review of the Disability Confident Commitments and Health Adjustment Passports

The RNCM is signed up the Disability Confident Scheme and as part of that the commitments are reviewed on an annual basis. As part of the most recent review we added guidance to the job application page regarding Health Adjustment Passports (a document that job seekers can use to record details of their disability and adjustments that may help with interviews) and how they can be submitted alongside job applications.

Access to Work support

The HR team continued to investigate and facilitate support for a number of existing staff with a disability and several other staff continued to receive ongoing support during 2023/24. This included specialist equipment, staff training and staff support workers.

Bullying and Harassment legislation

From October 2024 the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 will come into force. The act signals a major change for employers who will have a duty placed on them to take 'reasonable steps' to prevent the sexual harassment of their employees.

Whilst the College already has policies and procedures in place that address bullying and harassment in the workplace, an action plan was created by the HR team that identified additional actions and steps that can be taken in response to the new duty that is being introduced. Existing arrangements, along with the additional actions aim to ensure we eliminate any unlawful or unfair discrimination and promote belonging in a diverse and inclusive community.

1.2.4 Development and Equity Fundraising Activity

The RNCM's Development team raises approximately 10% of the RNCM's income through philanthropy and corporate sponsorship. The team continues to pro-actively increase funds raised which will strengthen the RNCM's BEDI work. This year substantial philanthropic gifts helped establish new awards focussed on equitable access to musical education, including for disabled and neurodiverse students through the Lucy Hale Award (endowed to give £5k a year to students to apply for funding to support their musical practice).

'We set up the Lucy Hale Award in memory of our daughter, to support students with disabilities to access music in higher education. Music and disability rights were twin passions for Lucy, and we feel that this award keeps her close to us.' Nicky Hale, John Mellor and Ellie Mellor.

Gema Lu Cai – a fourth-year student specialising in music education who was diagnosed with a learning difficulty and ADHD during her time at the RNCM won the inaugural award which she used to purchase her first piano.

'I thought nothing good could come from my disability. But the Lucy Hale Award has given me hope that I am seen and understood. It has made me feel like I am not always at a disadvantage, and I will always be grateful for that.' Gema Lu Cai

Distributed through the RNCM Student Awards fund, the RNCM Ukrainian Musicians Fund raised £16,876 and provided essential support to five Ukrainian undergraduate and postgraduate students across the Schools of Strings, Keyboard Studies, and Wind, Brass, and Percussion. Ukrainian musicians on our Junior RNCM and Young Artists programmes have also benefited from vital support.

'The Young Artists programme feels like a family.'

Ivan, Young Artist supported by the RNCM Ukrainian Musicians Fund

We also gained support for specific international regions with two post graduate students from India, supported through the British Council GREAT Scholarships. In addition, we raised £20k to support Student Award for students exclusively from emerging economies.

Sony Music's Social Justice Fund (established to support projects which address injustice and racism) funded the second year of RNCM Young Artists, ensuring the project extended RNCM's reach to new young participants - 40% Global Majority Ethnicity and 59% IMD Quintiles 1 and 2, encouraging young people from non-traditional backgrounds to enter higher education. Following the project's inaugural year, two young people successfully gained places on RNCM's highly competitive BMus Popular Music undergraduate degree course.

'The Young Artists programme gave me the opportunity to meet other young musicians from a diverse background. We were able to collaborate on original music with State-of-the-Art studios where we could produce our music.' Young Artists Graduate.



We are also proud to report that £8,495 was raised for the Williams-Howard Prize which celebrates the study and performance of art songs by composers of the African diaspora. Alongside monetary prizes for six students, winners received bespoke coaching and performed at Buxton International Festival.

Finally, 2023/24 saw 'The Principal Circle' group of philanthropists funding an artist residency for virtuoso sitarist Jasdeep Singh Degun, developing students' musical breadth of world-music knowledge and collaborative skills.

2. Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework

2.1 The Legislative Framework

The Equality Act 2010 introduced legislation which seeks to end discrimination. The College complies with the specific duties of the Equality Act, which are:

- Publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the general equality duty. This must include information relating to people who share a protected characteristic who are its employees or people affected by its policies and practices.
- Prepare and publish one or more objectives that it thinks it needs to achieve to further any of the aims of the general equality duty.
- The objectives must be specific and measurable.

The College is fully committed to meeting its duties under the Equality Act, which will be monitored by the BEDI Forum, whilst also identifying good practice and championing innovation, via the Belonging Project Funding.

2.2 Gender Pay Gap

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, employers with 250 or more employees must publish gender pay gap information every year. [Royal Northern College of Music gender pay gap data for 2023-24 reporting year - GOV.UK - GOV.UK \(gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/royal-northern-college-of-music-gender-pay-gap-data-for-2023-24-reporting-year)

Gender Pay Gap calculations are based on RNCM payroll data from a specific date each year, known as the '**snapshot date**'. Data is published every year within 12 months of the snapshot date. The gender pay gap measures the difference between average (**median**) hourly earnings of men and women, usually shown by the percentage men earn more than women.

The following information is Gender Pay Gap data based on a snapshot date of 31st March 2022. The workforce at the 'snapshot date' of 31 March 2022 was 479 full-pay relevant employees, which is made up by 254 (53%) men and 225 (47%) women.

Analysis

- The RNCM's median (0%) gender pay gap has remained the same from the previous twelve-month period. ONS reports that the median pay for all UK employees was 14.3% less for women than for men in April 2023 (14.4% in 2022).
- The RNCM's mean (6.8%) gender pay gap has continued its downward trend (8.5% in 2022).
- In the UK, the gender pay gap has been declining slowly over time; over the last decade it has fallen by approximately a quarter among full time employees, and in April 2023 it stands at 7.7% ('Gender Pay Gap in the UK - ONS Statistics 2023).
- 55% of the RNCM workforce is male, a small increase from the previous 12-month period.
- The proportion of women in the both the Upper and Upper Middle Quartiles has increased by 4.2% and 4.6% respectively from 2022.

Conclusions

The RNCM's gender pay gap data at 0% when compared to the national average, is the result of the long-term effort that the College has invested to ensure fair pay for all staff, including:

- Promoting and supporting flexible working policies for all employees, irrespective of gender, including job share, part time working and term time working. This also includes the introduction post-pandemic of the College's 'Blended Working Framework' which is focused on giving our staff the flexibility to choose, where practicable, where they do their work, whether that's in the office or working remotely.
- Having an objective job evaluation scheme for all employees to ensure pay fairness.
- Formal policy and process for any changes in pay, including accelerated increments, market supplements and starting pay upon appointment.
- Ensures transparent promotion, pay and reward processes providing equality data to Belonging, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (BEDI) Forum.
- Enhanced Shared Parental Pay to mirror contractual Maternity Pay.
- A commitment to meet the Real Living Wage for all staff since 202

The RNCM will:

- Continue to raise awareness of promotion processes across College.
- Continue to promote the benefits of flexible working practices to all staff.
- Promote the benefits of working for the RNCM both internally and externally, such as apprenticeship opportunities, flexible working, diversity commitments etc.
- Increase awareness about apprenticeship opportunities to encourage more employees to consider improving their skills and experience, providing them with a greater opportunity to progress their career.
- Continue to deliver recruitment and selection training to recruitment panels which highlights the issue of unconscious bias during recruitment and interview processes.
- Continue to ensure that recruiting managers use structured interviews linked to person specification.
- Prepare, analyse, and understand additional pay data on (1) pay levels (quartiles), (2) promotions, (3) recruitment at junior level, (4) resignations, (5) Part-time employees etc.



3. Staff

3.1 Access to Work Scheme (ATW) and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

As in previous years during the 2023/24 academic year the College has continued to support staff through funding available via Access to Work, a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. It aims to provide practical and financial support for employees if they have a disability or long term physical or mental health condition. The College contributes towards the total cost of approved support with ATW making up the difference. Over the past twelve-month period the College the financial support received has contributed towards the following support;

- new support workers onboarded and in place for the 23/24 academic year
- £2,716 for specialised IT hardware and equipment for academic and professional services support users
- £10,083 for specialised IT software for academic and professional services support users to access and utilise
- £13,745 for training on aforementioned specialised IT software and training sessions for academic and professional services support users.

The support available for staff through ATW continues to be promoted to all staff.

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

After several years and a review of Care First our previous provider, the College moved to a new provider at the start of the 2023/24 academic year, Health Assured.

Health Assured EAP is a free confidential employee benefit designed to help staff deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting their home life or work life, health, and general wellbeing.

The EAP service provides a complete support network that offers expert advice and compassionate guidance 24/7, covering a wide range of issues. We provide an EAP service that offers not only reactive support when someone needs it but also proactive and preventative support to deliver the best possible outcomes.

Balancing everyday life with the requirements of work and home can create pressures for all of us.

Practical information and emotional support that is available

- Life support: Access to counselling for emotional problems and a pathway to structured therapy sessions (employees only) at your convenience.
- Legal information: For issues that cause anxiety or distress including debt management, consumer, property or neighbour disputes (employees only).
- Bereavement support: Health Assured offers qualified and experienced counsellors who can help with grief plus legal advisors to help with related legal matters.
- Medical information: Qualified nurses are on hand to offer support on a range of medical or health-related issues offering practical information and advice.
- Online CBT: We recognise the value of self-help tools in dealing with a range of issues, which is why we have a range of CBT self-help modules, informative fact sheets and invaluable advice videos from leading qualified counsellors.

3.2 Staff Health and Staff Wellbeing Hub

A Staff Wellbeing Hub was introduced during 2021/2022 with its main aim to ensure that all staff feel a sense of belonging and wellbeing at the RNCM. A Wellbeing Working Group is now established, and a strategy framework has been developed with input from staff. The three vision statements for the Staff Wellbeing Strategy were identified following a survey to staff whereby a number of wellbeing statements were presented, and staff were asked to rank the statements in order of importance to them.



The three statements that scored the highest are:

- We are committed to supporting a working environment in which staff can thrive and fulfil their potential.
- We are committed to building a working environment in which colleagues feel supported by and connected with each other.
- We aim to embed a culture of wellbeing in all aspects of working at the RNCM.

The 'Gratitude is an Attitude' thank you scheme was launched and has been very well received by staff. Thank you postcards are available for staff to write messages of appreciation to colleagues. In addition, nominations can be made for receipt of a £10 Amazon voucher to say thank you.

The 'RNCM Gardening Group' was introduced, with volunteers from across the College taking part. A generous pledge was received as part of the College 50th Anniversary celebrations, specifically to improve the upper roof garden and work made great progress throughout 2023/24.

The RNCM continues to promote the disability confident scheme including where candidates meet minimum requirements, they are guaranteed an interview. This has resulted in increased opportunities for individuals with a disability and ensures we provide an inclusive and accessible recruitment process. Our job vacancy page has been updated to include guidance regarding

Health Adjustment Passports that can be used to accompany an application and providing the opportunity for the applicant to highlight any adjustments that may help them during the recruitment process, as well as in the workplace.

Lunch and Learn sessions have been launched and have been well attended. These sessions allow for peer to peer learning, as well as social interaction with colleagues. Topics covered include:

- Disability awareness - managing reasonable adjustments
- LGBTQ+ - How to be an ally
- Wellbeing and managing burnout
- Performance Development Reviews
- Using Sharepoint

The Staff Wellbeing Group and the Student Wellbeing Hub have begun to work more closely together to identify where resources can be shared, this includes focussing on the same theme days/weeks (such as University Mental Health Day) and promoting access to services that are available to both College employees and students.

3.3 Reward and Recognition Monitoring

Professional services staff applications – equality analysis

There were 21 Reward and Recognition applications during 2023/24. There was a gender split of 57% Female and 42% Male, whilst the spread across age groups was fairly even. 81% of awards were made to white Professional Services Employees, 14% to Global Majority employees and 5% preferred not to disclose ethnicity. It was noted that 95% of awards were made to staff with no known disability, meaning staff with known disabilities received 5% of awards.

Academic Staff Grading Review – equality analysis

There were 7 applications during 2023-24 all of which were approved.

4. Students

4.1 Supporting Student Success

Having completed three academic cycles since its establishment, the Student Health and Wellbeing Hub continues to provide and develop a holistic approach to Wellbeing Services and embedding Wellbeing education in the curriculum. A particular strength of the model is the collaboration with Academic Services, the Programmes and Schools, and the Students' Union, enabling a proactive approach to monitoring student engagement and identifying students at risk of disengagement. This continues to be a team effort, requiring staff from across the College to collaborate on providing information, support and interventions to ensure students' flourishing.

2024/2025 will see a consolidation of the developments in 2023/24 providing further clarity in our approach to supporting Fitness to Study and Return to Study as well as further enhancements to our engagement monitoring processes, usage of the monitoring dashboard and the broadening of the engagement data which is collected and monitored.

4.2 Student Health and Wellbeing Hub

During 2023-24, the Student Health and Wellbeing Hub team worked with a full case load of students, offering wellbeing interventions, making reasonable adjustments and overseeing study skills support for students applying for DSA funding, as well as providing English Language support and opportunities to learn about musicians' health and wellbeing in several BMus modules.

The Hub underwent an external audit as part of the RNCM's rolling programme of audits. In July 2024, the report provided "a Substantial Assurance rating that the College is committed to supporting the wellbeing of its students and is continually reflecting on the initiatives it offers and how it can further enhance the support it gives." A new Student Health and Wellbeing Policy will be launched during 2024-25. One area of continued focus is to strengthen wider staff awareness

(e.g. of neurodivergence, specific learning disabilities, signs of mental illness etc.) and confidence in giving support and signposting. This effort has been helped this year with the introduction of a revised Safeguarding Policy.

The Hub team has continued to develop and expand during 2023-24, welcoming a new English Language Tutor (0.2FTE), who started in autumn 2023. Increased resource during 2023-24 resulted in an addition of 480 hours for the Counselling Service, resulting in a total of 1.2 FTE for 40 weeks. This enhancement had a significantly positive effect on the student experience of counselling, with average waiting times reduced from 8 weeks to 2 weeks from the point of referral to the initial session. The additional hours also facilitated closer collaboration among the counsellors, which enhanced the support provided to students. During 2023-24, the Counselling Service successfully piloted a first-come-first-served approach, shifting away from triaging based on severity of need.



The Counselling Service refers to the Greater Manchester Universities Student Mental Health Service (GMUSMHS), a partnership between five HEIs and the NHS. RNCM students with more severe mental health problems benefit from this service and per capita we refer the highest number of students compared to our neighbouring institutions.

The Hub has implemented a new database that includes a secure space for storing information regarding students' conditions. This system also generates Personal Learning Plans (PLPs), which outline how these conditions affect their studies and detail any reasonable adjustments. The new system effectively supports students with disabilities by securely managing confidential information while providing staff with relevant data clearly and securely. Its seamless integration with existing systems enables accurate data analysis, resulting in better-informed decisions and improved support for students. The system was launched during the Staff Conference in September 2023.

Following the closure of St Peter's House (Summer 2023), the Hub approached the University of Manchester's Multi-faith Chaplaincy Network, who have confirmed that RNCM students can access their provision from 2024-25 onwards. The Hub considers this to be an important part of the whole-person approach to student support and to reflect the College's BEDI principles.

The Wellbeing modules continue to be popular with students and consistently receive excellent feedback. They are flexible and responsive to emerging well-being themes and to the

developmental needs of the different student cohorts. The Wellbeing pathway embedded within the BMus programme has ensured all students are learning about musicians' wellbeing and are reflecting on their own health in a practical way, underpinned with current research.

The Hub is still building awareness of the Whole-Institution approach to student and staff wellbeing. It continues to publicise Togetherall to staff and students. During 2023-24, all College staff were invited to take the Zero Suicide Alliance online training; 50 completed it. The Hub will also trial a series of Supporting Students workshops for staff, amplified by a news digest of recent developments, reminders, advice and other information.

4.3 Support for students with disabilities and long term conditions

Profile of students using the Disability and Wellbeing Service: Any student who has declared a disability/condition that may affect their studies is offered the opportunity to set up a Personal Learning Plan (PLP). A PLP details their condition and the effect it has across all areas of their learning, both performance and academic. It also incorporates any reasonable adjustments that the College is required to make in order to support them, such as extra time in examinations.

Academic Year	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Total PLP's issued	113	137	105	112	121	136

The breakdown according to sector-standard disability categories was as follows:

Disability Type	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Specific learning difficulty SpLDs	52	66	67	74	90	98
Mental health condition	42	80	68	49	59	71
Longstanding illness/health condition	18	26	27	21	22	27
Sensory impairment	5	4	3	5	5	5
Social/communication conditions E.G autistic spectrum condition/ADHD	8	12	8	15	21	32
Physical and/or mobility impairment	5	3	8	6	2	7

The number of students reporting mental health issues has increased over the last three years. However, students are still arriving with complex needs, which may not have been met prior to their arrival or they have been unable to access support due to long waiting lists for NHS services. Whilst most areas continue to maintain a steady state of reported numbers, it is noted that there has been a large increase in reported neurodiverse conditions and SpLDs. This can be related to continuing increases in ADHD and ASC diagnosis, which is reflective of the HE sector and society.

Reporting Progress in 2024/2025

The College is committed to ensure we make progress against the objectives set out in our BEDI Policy and each of the Supporting Strategies for Research, Education and our Artistic Strategy, particularly the targets set out in the Access and Participation Plan (APP). We will also continue to report on progression of the HR Objectives and Development and Fundraising activity.

Next year's report will focus on the targeted activity around Neurodiversity, implementing our new Access and Participation Plan and our continued commitment to working in partnership with students and our community to celebrate and explore diversity through the model of cross college engagement, as a result of the success of 'RNCM Disability' and 'Juia Perry' weeks in 23/24. We will also work with the Students Union and our students to implement the new condition of registration with the OfS relating to prevention and handling of **sexual misconduct and harassment**.