

# Trustees' Annual Report 2018



**‘Like Hogwarts, but with real magic.’**

Paul Curtis, Premier Inn Regional Operations Manager North Wales and North West

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The Trustees (governors), who are also the directors of the Derwen College charity, here report on the main activities of the College in 2018.



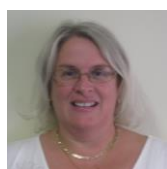
## Board of Governors

 <b>Kathleen Kimber</b> Chair FE Management	 <b>Peter Jones</b> Vice Chair Teacher - Mentor	 <b>Jamie Ward</b> Vice Chair Local Businessman	 <b>Cllr. Krista Childs</b> Wrexham County Borough Council Nominee	 <b>Mick Cowan</b> Teaching & Learning	 <b>Barbara Court</b> Finance / HR Management	 <b>Paul Evison</b> Chartered Accountant
 <b>Gillian Richards</b> Local Businesswoman	 <b>Vicki Cox</b> Teaching	 <b>Lord Lloyd Kenyon</b> Businessman	 <b>Helen Smith</b> Practice Education Facilitator at Glyndwr University	 <b>Cllr. Paul Milner</b> Shropshire Council Nominee	 <b>John Morten</b> Businessman Confectionery	 <b>Helen Owens</b> Business Manager NHS

*Co-optees on Business & Finance (B&F) and Estates Committees*

 <b>Jackie Ridge</b> B&F, Estates Businesswoman	 <b>Carol Thompson</b> Clerk to Governors
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Vice-Chairs: Jamie Ward and Peter Jones were elected on 19 July 2018 for a one-year term



Fiona Hammond (until 27 February 2018) and Carol Thompson (from 30 April 2018)

Clerk to the Board of Trustees / Governors

- Justin Soper resigned as a co-optee to Standards & Effectiveness Committee, 11 March 2018
- Cllr. Andrew Hinchliff resigned 11 October 2018
- Irene Gull retired 19 July 2018
- Barbara Court became a co-opted governor 23 May 2018
- Gillian Richards was co-opted as a governor 19 July 2018
- Vicki Cox was co-opted as a governor 11 October 2018
- Robert Macey resigned 11 October 2018
- Jackie Ridge was co-opted to Business & Finance and Estates Committees 3 December 2018
- Helen Smith became a co-opted governor on 3 December 2018

We record our thanks to all governors and co-opted members for their commitment and work. We particularly acknowledge the enormous and many generous contributions of Irene Gull. We all miss



her wisdom and lightness of touch in meetings, and record with thanks our appreciation of her ability to keep the students and trainees as the focus of both everything she did and our work.

## **The objectives of Derwen College – *where learning comes to life***

The College provides education, support and accommodation, and specialist expertise, to people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

### **The Mission**

To provide inspirational learning, development and care, and enable the achievement of aspirations which transform lives.

### **The current context and challenges**

Derwen College, a charity of over 90 years' standing, is proud to report on another year in which the achievements of students and trainees has been outstanding and in which significant steps have been taken to secure the long term excellence and viability of its provision for people with learning difficulties and disabilities.



However, 2018 continued to be a period of unprecedented challenges. The College recognises that the principal risks and uncertainties facing the charity arise from the constant change characterised by the regulatory frameworks within which the College operates. The impact of reductions in public spending are being felt across further education and have certainly had a significant impact on national specialist colleges. Funding constraints in England and Wales are both tighter and more unpredictable than ever before. Decision-making by local authorities means that students are frequently finding it harder to secure funding for residential placements, as increasingly cash-strapped authorities are seeking to keep people in their home area. This has resulted in a continued reduction in the number of residential students in the College, with the number of day students not fully compensating for this loss. It is clear that these trends will continue. They have been fully recognised and have been the main catalyst in the strategic planning undertaken.

The Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Reforms and the SEN Code of Practice are still being

implemented with varying and inconsistent patterns of practice and procedure across the country. Provision for people with high need learning difficulties and disabilities is not as easily secured as the legislation intended. Considerable time is spent lobbying and alerting those in authority to the reality of the implementation of the changes. The College has been fortunate during 2018 to have the Chair of Natspec (a membership organisation for providers of high needs education) as its Chief Executive / Director of Strategy, a position which gives significant additional access to decision-makers and opinion-formers. The College remains at the leading edge of discussions about specialist provision. However it is evident that nationally the focus is on restricting the development and training of students with learning difficulties and disabilities to their home area wherever possible.

## **The main activities during 2018**

### **Provision overview**

The curriculum is highly innovative and inclusive and has a strong and relevant focus on vocational skills. At the end of 2017, following detailed analysis of student destination data, the decision was taken to amend the organisation of the curriculum and to focus on Hospitality and Customer Services, Creative Arts and a dedicated pathway for those young people not yet ready for customer facing work – ‘Work Skills’. This recognises the increasing complexity of the students’ range of learning difficulties and disabilities and maximises opportunities for access to work and meaningful activity. From September 2018 the organisational structure has been:

#### **Hospitality and Customer Services – with pathways in:**

- Hospitality and Housekeeping
- Horticulture
- Retail

#### **Further pathway options**

- Creative Arts
- Work Skills

The structure of departments emphasises and recognises their interdependence. It underpins the holistic programmes followed by students and trainees. The development of specific understanding and skills which will be invaluable in the workplace, is underpinned by functional skills and work experience. These skills become more rounded and transferable through creative activity and independence development. Health and well-being, personal care programmes, and sport and leisure activities contribute to a student’s ability to act and live independently. Access to all provision is enabled through appropriate speech and language, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and counselling services provided as appropriate for each individual by the specialist staff team. Personal tutors and the Transition team help students set and monitor aspirational targets, and they offer advice and guidance to support decision making for the future.

Work experience is an integral part of programmes. During 2017-18 there has been further increased emphasis on trying to secure placements which will lead to real work and activity in a student’s home area after leaving College. An impressive number of companies have been contacted for potential work placements which would result in industry and local opportunities for learners. Companies contacted include Debenhams, Morrison’s, Lidl, Marks & Spencer, Boots, B&Q, B&M, Wilko, Home Bargains, Matalan, Designs in Mind, The Spinney (horticulture), Nightingale House, Ty Mawr animals, Prezzo and the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital. 97% of learners undertook an external

work placement, with the maximum during 2017-18 being 159 per week. Students take pride in their placement leading to 98.5% stating they enjoyed their external placement, 98.5% stating they felt their placement was helping them to learn skills for when they leave College, 98.5% feeling safe whilst at their placement. This was reflected in 100% attendance and 99% punctuality.

Partnership working with national companies is a high priority:

*Premier Inn couldn't be prouder to work in partnership with this life-changing educational establishment and it's a joy to see the young people learn new skills and flourish under the guidance of the college and our hard-working teams. As part of our Force For Good corporate social responsibility programme we're absolutely committed to giving back to the communities in which we serve so we're delighted to have Derwen students in employment with us across the country. The partnership is about more than simply 'giving back' though – we get so much ourselves. We think business excellence is cemented by diversity and this partnership in particular not only enables a pipeline of employees but inspires and motivates our teams.*  
(Chief Operating Officer, Premier Inn).

Work at Derwen@Walford, Coleg Derwen and Derwen@Craven Arms is going from strength to strength, with increased numbers of day students and each site developing its own identity and focus, while still maintaining the strong focus on independence development and vocational and project activity.

## **Students and learning**

The focus of the College's organisation and operation is unequivocally the students and trainees and each is valued as an individual. The College programmes are holistic. All students have access to the care, support and therapies needed to enable them to maximise their development. The College is a Makaton centre of excellence and students' needs for: speech and language therapy; physiotherapy; occupational therapy; and counselling are met by College staff. Students' progress towards independent living, developed during a two- or three-year residential period, continues to amaze those who knew them on arrival.

Thorough initial assessment processes result in each individual having achievable but aspirational programme aims. Destination data and feedback show that the skills developed in the vocational areas of the College, in addition to the personal and independence development enjoyed by residential students, are enabling students to live in the community with the greatest level of autonomy of which they are capable.



The range of work experience opportunities is extensive. The College was the first Natspec college to achieve the Gold standard of the Work Experience Quality Standards, a standard recredited in summer 2018. Staff work systematically to strengthen the links with local employers and also with national chains, such as Premier Inn, Sainsbury's and Tesco. This leads to links with branches in a student's home area. There were potentially ten students moving from Derwen to paid

jobs with Premier Inn this summer. There is a well-developed range of local community projects and partnerships, such as attendance at Farmers' Markets, running the café at Gobowen railway station (another award-winning initiative), and producing hanging baskets for Llangollen Town Council. Excellent real work opportunities are also provided within the dc Shopping and Leisure commercial outlets on the College perimeter. The Orangery restaurant and the Garden Café have regular clientele as well as passing trade. The Garden Centre and its transformed shop offer real competition to local outlets. In the Food Centre, students produce chutneys, jams, bread and cakes which others then sell in the Garden Centre Shop, where the products of students' creative talents are also on display – and for sale. The Print Centre offers a range of services to local people.



Of particular note has been very significant increase in the emphasis on development of independence and personal skills. All student meals are now prepared and taken within their residences. Students have been taught about managing their medication. Rigorous attention has been paid to developing travel skills with a 65% rise in travel-training assessments completed this year. Personal safety and online safety have a high priority and students manage their own devices with care, support and guidance from College staff. Each student now has a dedicated link nurse, and issues of well-being, mental health and medication are being approached sensitively and actively.

Sport and leisure activities are of critical importance to students' well-being and development. The range of activities is impressive and the drive of the staff to involve and challenge students is noteworthy. 47 different evening and weekend clubs ran during the 2017-18 year. In addition, students competed in the Special Olympics, the Natspec Games, North of England Disability golf open, Shropshire Boccia tournament, and the North Shropshire Cross Country. Students played in the Shropshire Disability Cricket team, and the football teams and tennis players won cups and medals locally and at Warwick University and in North Wales. The College female football team, Derwen Devas, was formed in partnership with Chester Football Club. And huge numbers of students took part in Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE) activities.

In addition to the focus on employability, the students are skilfully encouraged to become active citizens. The elections to the Student Union Board develop an understanding of the democratic process and involvement in the Union enables them to play a significant part in planning and influencing College life.

*Of particular note is the way in which the .... representatives are able to use the opportunity to gain experience and to develop a range of skills, for example, advocacy, presentation, managing meetings, decision making skills and the positive impact the experience has on an individual's confidence and self-esteem. (matrix report 2018)*

However, governors have particularly sought to recognise and applaud the outstanding work the Union officers undertake locally and nationally to raise awareness of disability and support those addressing disability issues. One of the Union officers has been elected to the National Union of Students national FE committee. The ground-breaking collaborative work with the NUS, initiated in 2014, has continued



with further awards, this year the Democracy Award. Within College the officers of the Student Union Board fulfil many important roles, including being members of the groups with oversight of: Safeguarding; Prevent; Equality, diversity and inclusion; Health and safety; and Infection prevention and control. In addition, they are involved in staff interview panels.

Competition activity is an essential part of the College's curriculum. In May the College hosted the Inclusive Skills competition heats for Catering (Entry Level 2) and Restaurant Service (Entry Level 1). Carter Gough won Gold in Table Laying and one Hospitality student won Gold in Catering. Two other



students won Silver and Bronze respectively. Entry to competitions extends students' skills to high levels of excellence, and enhances capacity in attributes valued by employers, such as teamwork, prioritisation, time management, and working under pressure. These activities have enabled students to be thoroughly challenged and have increased confidence and aspiration immensely.

Students have performed in various community activities. Derwen on Tour, the dance group, were invited onto the main stage as part of the Llangollen Eisteddfod Inclusion project and were featured in a brief clip on S4C. Visual arts workshops have been delivered in a local school. Creative Arts students' work was displayed in the Qube 'Painting by Pixels' exhibition. Students wrote a poem which has been incorporated in the statue of Wilfred Owen, unveiled in November in Oswestry.

At the graduation ceremony in November, one leaver spoke of her time at the College. Her words included:

After three years at Derwen College I feel I have changed. When I first came I was quiet and scared. Now I have grown in confidence, even talking on stage! Later I will dance for the last time with the amazing DOT [Derwen on Tour]. I have loved my independence. I learnt to be professional. Even when it was difficult... I got on with the job. I loved tennis in Wrexham and the Duke of Ed. There were discos, trips, sneaky take-aways, girly film nights, magnificent Prom. It has been like an incredible crazy dream. Thank you ..for making it happen.

## **Development projects and the College sites**

The facilities at the College and at the three satellites remain outstanding. The governors' Estate Committee has been busy reviewing all properties and land and seeking to ensure they are fit for purpose. Decisions to release and adapt properties, land and buildings have been carefully considered. As a result, following rigorous scrutiny of the strategic implications of decisions, the four Twmpath Cottages were put up for sale, as their distance from College and state of repair meant they were no longer suitable for student-related activity. The same considerations applied to Walnut Croft, a pair of semi-detached bungalows, and after securing outline planning permission for a building plot in the garden to the rear, these properties were also put on the market. Outline planning permission for the development of 3.5 acres of land off Southlands Avenue was also submitted for approval.



The Therapy and Fitness Centre project has seen the completion of Phase 1, the re-roofing of the swimming pool and installation of a new heating system, and the beginning of Phase 2. Work on the building of a hydrotherapy pool started on 3 September 2018 and will be completed mid-2019.

There has been a change of use for several buildings as part of the review. The former Farm Shop now houses the College Reception, and the Retail building will be used to accommodate the Business Hub, a conference and training facility funded by a Local Enterprise Partnership grant. The Eatery and some residential buildings will be used by Bryn Melyn (a separate organisation), who will open Derwen School for children with learning difficulties and disabilities in January 2019. The School and its operation are completely separate from Derwen College. Other projects are also being pursued.

The focus on establishing detailed maintenance and improvement plans for the College's buildings and residential accommodation continues and upgrading and refurbishment are very high on the priority list. The significant roof replacement programme for all the bungalows has been completed.

To help meet the needs of the Government's localism agenda, the College purchased a property in Wales. **ColegDerwen@Ashdale** was opened on 25 September 2014 and is focusing on day provision for local students and some from the main campus. Another satellite, **Derwen@Walford**, was opened on 5 November 2014, an innovative partnership with Shropshire Council and North Shropshire College. A property in the south of the county was also purchased and **Derwen@CravenArms** opened for work with students during 2015. All three now have fully staffed teams, steadily growing admissions and are open five days a week.

## Management and structural review



### The Leadership Team



**Ruth Thomas**  
Director of Strategy  
Part time



**Meryl Green**  
Principal



**Andrew Smith**  
Director:  
Business and Finance



**Natalie Bellis**  
Director:  
Human Resources & Estates



**Karen George**  
Registered Manager  
Director:  
Clinical, Care & Therapies

Much time has been spent on establishing staffing levels and expertise as the College has moved towards fewer students, with more complex needs, and committed to the exploration and implementation of a range of projects. It was with genuine sadness that we said goodbye to staff and we wish to record our appreciation of their contributions. All changes were the subject of extensive consultation, reflection and discussion at Board and senior management level. The Leadership Team has been headed by Ruth Thomas, our Director of Strategy, and is now under the leadership of the Principal, Meryl Green. The Directors have an increasingly committed and able team of senior managers working to them and helping to ensure quality and real drive. Governors work particularly closely with the Leadership Team.

## **Outstanding performance and quality**

The College has continued to benefit from considerable analysis and judgement of its performance. Internally it has a well-established, thorough and transparent self-assessment system. Quality and the achievement of Improvement Plan targets are monitored throughout the year and the formal departmental evaluations of performance and outcomes are moderated in the autumn by panels that include governors. These rigorous self-assessment procedures led the College to grade its performance 2017-18 as outstanding.

The Self-assessment Report for 2017-18, scrutinised and approved at Board level, included the following:

### **Strengths:**

- Governors and senior leaders set an ambitious and demanding ethos, mission and culture and continue to steer the organisation skillfully through challenging times
- Extremely robust quality improvement cycle reflecting both Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) frameworks resulting in excellent quality of provision across all sites
- Highly effective performance management and professional development of staff across the organisation
- Excellent person-centred admissions and pre-entry processes leading to development of truly bespoke programmes and tailored support packages
- Consistently outstanding quality of teaching, learning and assessment including provision of employability skills, information, advice and guidance
- Extensive external work experience programme with 97% of students accessing, high quality, community placements during 2017-18
- Impressive industry partnerships leading to paid employment
- Excellent support for independence including meal preparation, travel training and (where appropriate) self-medication
- Outstanding sports and leisure programme with particularly impressive D of E Award Scheme outcomes

However, as before, we have identified specific areas for attention, e.g.

- To monitor the impact of new business initiatives, e.g. The Hub / Short Breaks provision / Derwen School partnership, and to maximise benefits to the different learner groups and to the organisation as a whole
- To maximise the potential of the Premier Inn training facility by opening to the public during 2019, and to continue to explore the feasibility of an on-site caravan park

- To formulate a clear strategy for communication with key stakeholders to ensure consistency, timeliness and accuracy of messaging
- To ensure that student facing areas keep pace with the changing demands and support needs of the whole cohort including an update of the Student Union and programme of renovation for the bungalow site

## Public recognition of excellence

Although there were no Ofsted or Care Quality Commission inspections in 2018, the College is determined to strive to exceed previous performance (Ofsted – Outstanding and CQC – Good) when next inspected. Performance management, evaluation and analysis now reflect these public inspection frameworks: CQC - safe, caring, effective, responsive and well-led, and Ofsted, which is currently consulting on an amended framework.

During 2018 the *matrix* standard inspection took place. This is a review of the College's accreditation of its provision of information, advice and guidance to students and prospective students. The report included:

*The College...provides a needs-led, student focussed service. Of particular note is the way in which the student progress tracking system provides a mechanism through which to monitor individual student progression against a range of hard and soft outcomes aligned to the individual's long term goal, individual learning goals and objectives. ...the approach has been further improved by the introduction of bespoke targets that break down goals into simple steps. (matrix report May 2018)*

In November the newly appointed CEO of the Makaton Charity and a Director visited Derwen and were very impressed by the Speech and Language team:

*it was truly wonderful to see you in your own setting, to meet the fabulous team and to see the many examples of all the hard work you have achieved to make the Derwen College fully inclusive and accessible to its students. It was inspirational. (Zanna)*

and

*.. a truly inspirational visit to what is clearly a very cutting edge organisation with a fantastic team. You certainly gave us much to think about. My head was buzzing all the way back to London. (Stephen)*





From a member of the public – February 2018:

I regularly travel by train to Cardiff from North Wales. On my return journey today from Cardiff, a member of your organisation, whom I believe was part of the Student Support Team, boarded the train with 2 of your students. As we travelled north more students joined the group, to the point where I believe there were 8 students.

I would like to congratulate you for the extremely professional way in which your member of staff engaged, mentored and treated each of the students with respect and care. I would also like to say the students themselves behaved impeccably and demonstrate qualities that will hold them in good stead as they move forward.

I wouldn't normally bother to send such a message, but as a rather cynical senior NHS accountant, I think it is important for people to receive positive feedback. I felt humbled by a most enjoyable 2 hours I spent in their company, and it is one which will leave a lasting impression on me.

Close and frequent attention is given by governors to the scrutiny of any causes for concern through a specific session of governors from the Standards and Effectiveness Committee with relevant staff. However it is heartening for all to read the many tributes received from parents, carers and stakeholders.

From the parent of a student:

'I found M's transition from Derwen College and beyond seamless. There was a good connection between transition staff at Derwen and M's social workers, which meant that a supported living placement was set up early on. .... the Transition Coordinator at Derwen College has always kept in touch to ensure that M has been able to continue to build upon her employment skills and maintain a fulfilled life.'



A year ago we reported on the outstanding successes of the students on the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. 2018 saw an increase in the numbers completing the programme and achieving their challenging targets. For each award participation in four categories is required: volunteering, physical exercise, skills development and expedition. The successes 17-18 were:  
Bronze Award: 21 students      Silver Award: 21 students  
Gold Award: 8 students

The Gold Awards are presented formally at either Buckingham Palace or St James's Palace.



## Governance

### The development of the Charity

Derwen College charity has a long pedigree. It was founded in 1927 by Dame Agnes Hunt and was originally based at the Orthopaedic Hospital in Gobowen. The Derwen Estate was purchased in 1928 and the first trust deed was established on 3rd August 1932. It was varied or affected by schemes of the Charity Commission dated 25th January 1968 and 18th August 1972, and then consolidated in the Deed of 29th November 1988.

An incorporated charity was established on 1st July 2014, Derwen College (Charity number 1153280, Companies House number 8615826). The former charity remains in existence as Derwen College Trust (charity number 208745) with the sole purpose of managing the permanently endowed property. It appointed as its trustees the new Derwen College charity.

The solicitors drew up a uniting directive which allows a single set of accounts to be drawn up, as the two entities have the same financial reporting period. “Linked” financial statements for both Companies House and the Charity Commission are submitted annually for reporting purposes.

## The regulatory framework of the charity

Under the agreed Articles of Association to which the College is now working there are:

- at least seven and not more than twelve co-opted trustees, appointed by resolution of the Board conforming to any criteria the Board determines, and
- five nominated trustees, one from each of five local authorities invited from time to time to nominate as determined by the Board.

The term of office of all trustees is five years, with an expectation that usually after three terms of office the Trustee shall be eligible for re-election only after a year has elapsed.

## Governors’ activity in 2018

*The range of knowledge, skills and experience of Board members is broad, relevant and generously shared. This has led to significant, purposeful, rigorous and analytical focus on the College’s strategic planning and the developments needed to secure its future. ... Governors have recognised the problems generated by the changing student population. They also recognised that this was not a problem which could be tinkered with; an in depth and significant review was needed. Governors played a full part in the analysis and scrutiny of leadership proposals and required evidence of well-thought through and realistic business plans, to ensure the feasibility of development projects. Following curriculum, financial, staffing and infrastructure analysis, effective changes have been agreed and implemented. The resulting ambitious vision is to ensure that provision remains to a very high standard for the learners. (from Governors’ Self-assessment 2017-18)*

It is noteworthy that much of the detailed analysis and scrutiny of the College’s operation is managed by the committees, of which there are now five. The Standards and Effectiveness Committee has given focused attention to a range of issues concerning care and clinical services, particularly Safeguarding, as well as teaching and learning. The Business and Finance Committee focuses on very detailed scrutiny of finances and budget, as well as the wider matters of corporate activity. The Human Resources Committee has spent much time on the analysis of HR data and the outcomes of consultations with staff and staff wellbeing. The Estates Committee works tirelessly to support directors in the review of tenancies, the establishment of detailed maintenance and refurbishment programmes, and, following the review of the College’s properties and estate, the sale and change in use of some buildings and land. The Search & Governance Committee monitors the range of expertise and the profile of the Board and the quality of governance.

The Board works closely with the Leadership Team. A very positive working relationship has been developed, which recognises the need for governors to provide effective challenge as well as active

support.

The key decisions taken during 2018 concern

- ❖ *the future curricular emphasis on Hospitality and Customer Service, Creative Arts and Work Skills, coupled with significant development projects to refine and enhance such provision*
- ❖ *the building of a free standing hydro-therapy pool as part of the Fitness Centre project*
- ❖ *the move to ensure the full use of College buildings, to include developing short break and independence training, and entering a service level agreement with Bryn Melyn to create Derwen School*
- ❖ *the disposal of those properties in Gobowen off the campus which are no longer fit for purpose and the realisation of some assets*
- ❖ *the continued focus on securing a resolution of some historical issues*
- ❖ *the development of a Business Hub, supported by the LEP*
- ❖ *the constant monitoring and analysis of the financial performance of the College*
- ❖ *negotiations with the Charity Commission to adapt the terms of the Derwen College Trust charity*

This clearly leaves us with a challenging and exciting programme for 2019, when business plans for projects and implementation of ideas will be the main thrust of activity.

## **Financial and resource management**

### **A going concern**

The audited and approved annual accounts are submitted by the due dates to both the Charity Commission and Companies House. After making all appropriate enquiries, very thorough consideration of draft budgets and cash flow up to 2019, and having taken key strategic decisions, the trustees expect the charity to have adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing financial statements.

### **Risk management**

The trustees regularly examine the principal areas of the College's operations and consider the major risks faced in each. There are established resources and review systems which, under normal conditions, should allow any risk to be managed to an acceptable level in the College's day to day operation. College risk management has two distinct tiers: strategic and operational. The operational level is reviewed on a 'real time' basis and deals with individual departments, students, functions and duties. At the strategic level the Leadership Team review the risk assessment register monthly and it is reviewed at least termly as part of the College quality improvement plan and presented to the



Business and Finance Committee where issues are debated and thereafter reported to the Board. This includes College pension funding, insurances and trustee responsibilities to ensure these remain in line with current legislation and operational factors.

The College's spacious campus is open to visitors and customers in the public areas and is imaginatively and purposefully managed to enable students to interact with staff and members of the public appropriately and safely. However, the open-plan nature of the campus and the heightened staff awareness of potential hazards necessitate regular reviews. During 2014 gates were erected at strategic points on the campus enabling a secure area for students, away from the public areas, to be closed off at 9 pm each evening. During 2017 the central area of the College became pedestrianised. Departmental operational risk management encompasses all locations and individuals. This is reviewed through the Health and Safety Committee, which now includes governor membership, audited by specialist advisors and monitored by external agencies.

The College provides a safe and supportive environment for learners to access the internet, including social networking sites. Staff give a high priority to providing support in the safe use of personal technology, such as mobile phones and computers.

### **Public benefit**

The quality of provision, inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, has been judged as outstanding and good respectively. The successes of former students continue to demonstrate that College programmes provide students with the skills, inspiration and motivation to achieve in their transition from College. The high level of staff expertise is a key element of the College's management of learning, student support and innovation. The Board believes that the College provides excellent value for money to the public purse and that student outcomes mean they can be less dependent on benefits throughout the rest of their lives.

The trustees are committed to necessary capital spending to maintain and enhance the College's facilities and to meet the legal and regulatory requirements. The agreed projects include the up grading of the residential accommodation, the establishment of the Business Hub, the construction of the hydrotherapy pool, the extended use of the Premier Inn facility, the establishment of short breaks provision, and the evaluation of the development of a caravan park. Business plans for other projects will be drawn up as agreed.

### **Fund raising**

The significant fund-raising in 2018 was for the hydrotherapy pool project and the College is indebted to its major fund-raiser as it was able to sign the construction contract in August and work has begun. This year the College organised a Sponsored Walk and the Summer Fete, as well as other, smaller events. Legacies and events held by local groups and individuals also brought in much appreciated income. The College is working hard to build up community fundraising through use of a new fundraising leaflet explaining how donations are spent, creation of a new charity logo, and use of clearer fundraising messages.

### **Investments policy and performance**

The College takes a prudent, low risk approach to investments, placing cash surpluses on deposit to attract a return, although this is not especially attractive with the current level of interest rates. This is

principally because the reserves may need to be utilised during the short to medium term for cash flow and for capital projects.

## Looking ahead

### Building the sustainable future

The full implementation of the Children and Families Act and the SEND Code, restrictions on local authority budgets and government grants to authorities to establish new 'local' provision make it inevitable that there could be further reductions in student enrolments and numbers - while there is **no** reduction in the need for placements as analysis of the many enquiries to the College clearly reveals. This situation requires continued rigorous financial management and clarity about future strategic direction and priorities. The Board and Leadership Team work to ensure every decision focuses on high quality and sustainability. The College continues to keep the students, trainees and clients, the beneficiaries of the charity, as its focus. It will continue to strive to deliver outstanding value for money, and believes it can and unequivocally does demonstrate excellence in comparison with recently developed, local provision across the country.

The importance of marketing and providing information, advice and guidance in the current climate is very evident. There is much misrepresentation and the term 'local offer' is misinterpreted. For many families and young people access to reliable, objective and comprehensive information is well-nigh impossible. The gap between the intention of recent legislation and the effects of its implementation remains huge; the trustees are committed to working with total integrity in the interests of people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Day-time only, part-time and short-break provision are now part of the College's offer. The curriculum has been further reviewed and honed and there are significant development projects being pursued to ensure it has yet greater relevance and high quality. The Admissions procedure is even more rigorous and thorough, in order to ensure that the needs and aspirations of incoming students and trainees are identified as precisely and accurately as possible.

The College is implementing its various projects with enthusiasm and confidence. The short-breaks and the independence programme should offer significant benefits and opportunities to those placed on them. It is envisaged that the increased use of the Premier Inn and the potential of a caravan park will enhance the Hospitality and Customer Service curriculum. The opening of the Business Hub will enable the College to share its expertise in disability with employers and other agencies. The service agreement with Derwen School will bring advantages to the College. The first supported internship programme, with Premier Inn in Preston, will be treated as a pilot on which to build.

The College's focus on ensuring that it works to industry standards wherever possible and promotes employment opportunities for students and trainees has led to significant partnerships with national companies and organisations, not least Premier Inn, Whitbread and Tesco. Much work is being done to extend this.

Significant progress has been made in extending partnership working in nursing, therapies and care, ensuring that the College's operation remains cutting-edge. Keele University uses the College for its placements for student nurses specialising in the care of those with learning disabilities. It also has links with the College's physiotherapists. Students of nursing from Glyndwr University also have placements at the College and students of psychology from Chester University volunteer here. Speech and language specialists work with Cardiff University and the College has support from the Shropshire

Learning Disability Team.

### **Efficient and effective in the face of uncertainty – the final word**

Most students are funded to come to the College because their needs cannot be provided for adequately and sufficiently in a non-residential, local further education college, nor can their potential be maximised. It is essential that the high quality provision that Derwen offers is sustained and available to future students and trainees if they are fully to develop independent living, social and vocational skills. The commitment of staff and trustees is to ensure this quality, within the culture of constant improvement which has been recognised to characterise the College's operation.

This is also a time of opportunity. In an external context which is hugely challenging, we continue to strive to deliver outstanding value for money. Delivering successful student outcomes within a sustainable cost base remain our fundamental objectives. We are seeking new funding streams and opportunities to ensure that we maximise our income. Provision will be further and regularly reviewed to explore, develop and drive ahead the agreed projects, new developments and opportunities.

We shall ensure that students, trainees and clients remain the focus of our decision-making, and that our operation is financially sound, forward-looking and proactive.

This report was approved by the Trustees on 19 February 2019 and signed on their behalf by:



**Mrs K Kimber (Chair)**