**Fairer Scotland Assessment**

**Title of Proposal [policy, strategy, workstream]:**

NHS Education for Scotland Strategy 2019-24

**Brief description of aim/objective:**

The NHS Education for Scotland’s Strategy 2019-24 establishes the vision, mission, areas of focus and strategic outcomes for the organisation for the next 5 years. It provides a framework to guide planning and investment as well as impact measurement and is a key document for communicating NES’s mission and key objectives with our staff, stakeholders and the public.

**Briefly summarise the relevance of the Fairer Scotland Duty to the proposal:**

This paper explains how we fulfilled our obligations with respect of the Fairer Scotland Duty during the development of this strategy. The Fairer Scotland Duty places a legal responsibility on public bodies to actively consider (pay due regard to) how we can “reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions”[[1]](#footnote-1) We describe how we took account of these issues within the remit of NES when setting our future strategy.

The Strategic Intent: 2019-24 section of the strategy identifies health inequalities as a key challenge to which health and care services must respond. This section further describes our ambition for health and care services and the contribution we hope to make to support this goal. Below, we highlight the following specific areas for consideration in this Fairer Scotland assessment:

1. Education and workforce development which responds to the needs of the population and service, informed by the context of social and health inequalities;
2. Access to, and progression through, education and career pathways;
3. Access to information and technology, and the information and digital skills to use these resources effectively.

**Summarise key findings from review of evidence or engagement, and any action taken or proposed as a result of those findings:**

This assessment has been informed by the findings of stakeholder engagement and a literature review of key documents.

* There were two rounds of stakeholder engagement. These comprised obtaining and taking account of internal NES staff and external stakeholder consultation on the previous Strategic Framework 2014-19 and an internal and external stakeholder consultation on the new draft NES Strategy 2019-24.
  + Findings from the internal (NES staff only) engagement (June-July 2018):
    - A major theme was the need to enhance inclusion/access/equality of opportunity to education, training and learning. References were made to “offer affordable learning for all” as well as equity in relation to geographical and digital terms.
  + Findings from the external stakeholder consultation (August-September 2018):
    - A key theme was the need to give credence to learning and education in the workplace. Frustrations were apparent around access to education and the inclusion of all staff groups. Additionally, a multi-modal approach to learning was advocated.
    - There were some references to supporting health improvement and in tackling health inequalities.
    - Finally, educational support across both health and social care was perceived positively.

Stakeholder feedback from the first round of engagement informed the development of the new draft NES Strategy 2019-24.

* + Findings from the internal and external stakeholder consultation on the draft NES Strategy 2019-24 (December 2018-January 2019):
    - Feedback was mostly positive. The five areas of focus and key outcomes were welcomed for their commitment to improve accessibility of learning and youth employment, widening entry into health care roles, an inclusive approach taken to skills development and career progression, and the emphasis placed on supporting staff to develop digital capabilities.

**Key issues arising from the stakeholder engagement process and the literature review:**

1. Education and workforce development which responds to the needs of the population and service, informed by the context of social and health inequalities

Persistent health inequalities and the complexity of managing long-term health conditions, lower health literacy, as well as prevention and health promotion are all issues associated with socio-economic disadvantage. Some stakeholder feedback suggested that NES should continue its support to develop workforce capability in these areas as this would help boards meet their objectives. NES already has a number of workstreams that address health inequalities. We have also carried out considerable work on health literacies, and both self-management and prevention are part of the Realistic Medicine strategy, which informs our delivery of medical and wider health care education. In the draft strategy, we have addressed this issue by establishing a cross-cutting theme:

*Promoting equality and diversity and tackling health inequalities*

This theme is to be read as an intersection with the key areas of focus, prompting us to consider how it may apply across all of our work. We will maintain planning guidance and organisational intelligence to support our staff to implement this approach within the context of their workstreams. This links to the area of focus designated as:

‘*Education and training for a skilled, adaptable and compassionate workforce’*

‘*A national digital platform, analysis, intelligence and modelling*.’

ii. Access to, and progression through, education and career pathways

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of access to learning and development for all staff groups, including work-based learning and multi-modal learning. Inclusion, access and equity in learning were themes highlighted in the NES staff consultation. Learning and staff development are associated not only with skills development and practice, but also with staff engagement, retention and opportunities for career progression.

Key issues to consider when implementing the Fairer Scotland Duty are support for flexible working and careers, widening access to education, work and to professions, engaging with groups that are further from employment, and taking an intersectional approach to strategies for youth employment.

The Joseph Roundtree Foundation (JRF) study, *Poverty in Scotland 2018[[2]](#footnote-2)[[3]](#endnote-1),* noted the trend of an increase in in-work poverty. Poverty is also compounded by the gender pay gap and the employment gap (both in terms of access to employment and under-employment) for disabled people. The Scottish Government’s *Fair Work Framework* sets out a vision of work based on principles to reduce poverty.

The Joseph Roundtree Foundation Report, *Poverty in Scotland, 2018*, highlighted the significant role of gender and disability inequality in the labour market contributing to poverty, particularly child poverty. The JRF recommends that it will be necessary to adopt an intersectional approach, aligning public policies to reduce these inequalities. Increased support for families experiencing poverty will also be required to avoid an uneven improvement disproportionately benefitting those already on higher incomes.

There are examples of existing NES (and NHS) programmes taking such an approach. One is youth employment, where strategic partnerships with organisations such as the Princes Trust, Barnardo’s, BEMIS and Who Cares? Scotland are supporting more targeted efforts to develop pathways into NHS careers for young people at higher risk of poverty. Our proposed activity on youth employment and existing work on developing educational and career pathways for healthcare support workers enhances learning and progression opportunities for lower income staff. These initiatives align with the *Fair Work Framework*.

These issues are particularly relevant to the areas of focus designated as:

*‘A high-quality learning and employment environment’*

*‘National infrastructure to improve attraction, recruitment, training and retention’*

Iii Access to information and technology, and the information and digital skills to use these resources effectively

Digital exclusion is an issue particularly impacting on people on low incomes and for some remote and rural areas[[4]](#footnote-3). Digital inclusion is multifaceted, involving access to digital infrastructure (broadband, wi-fi, devices), the suitability of infrastructure for the intended purpose, the cost of using the infrastructure, and associated digital and information literacies. Digital and information literacies can be context-specific and are not always directly transferred from one context (personal/recreational, work, learning) to another. These are issues which are relevant to the ability of individuals to benefit from engagement with digital for health and care, and for access to and success in education and careers. For NES, consideration of how we can advance digital inclusion and literacies for people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage will be essential for our workstreams on the national digital platform and our work on careers. It will also be a crucial aspect year to year for the cross-cutting principle of *enhancing digital access to learning, services and information.*

These issues will also be considered in relation to:

‘*National infrastructure to improve attraction, recruitment, training and retention’*

‘*Education and training for a skilled, adaptable and compassionate workforce’*

‘*A national digital platform, analysis, intelligence and modelling’*.

**Recommendations:**

This summary has indicated the primary considerations relating to socio-economic disadvantage which relate to the proposed areas of focus and cross-cutting principles. The development and review processes have involved NES staff and external stakeholders as well as a review of the literature. A range of comments have been received (which fit under the umbrella of the Fairer Scotland Duty) and have been documented in both reports.

* We have established a cross-cutting principle of *promoting equality and diversity, and tackling health inequalities* which clarifies our strategic intent to take an inequalities-aware approach to delivering our remit.
* Our strategic intent, areas of focus and outcomes highlight the importance of widening access to education, training and careers, which will bring tangible improvements for people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.
* A focus on digital inclusion, including widening digital participation and developing digital capability, should be central to the delivery of our digital functions.
* We will develop specific guidance on implementing the Fairer Scotland Duty through operational planning in accordance with the priorities described in this analysis.

**Note of decision:**

Due regard has been given to the Fairer Scotland Duty in the development of this new NES Strategy 2019-24

**Sign off by accountable director: Donald Cameron, Director of Planning and Corporate Resources**

**Date: 28/03/2019**

1. Scottish Government (2018). The Fairer Scotland Duty: Interim Guidance for Public Bodies. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0053/00533417.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poverty-scotland-2018> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
4. = See, for example, <http://heatmap.thetechpartnership.com/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)