

Mainstreaming the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Outcomes Progress Report 2023-2025

NES plays an important role in improving the health of the population and reducing health inequalities in our communities.

By attracting people to careers in health and social care, we can create jobs and boost the economy. Our work programmes ensure that those who work in health, social care and social work are skilled, confident, and motivated to continually improve outcomes for people. We promote and uphold human rights through our education and training and provide challenge where these are not being upheld.

You can find out more about NES at [About NHS Education for Scotland](https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/about-us/)

# Purpose of this report

As an NHS Board, NES is required to publish a report on the progress it has made to have ‘due regard’ to the Public Sector Equality Duty. Specifically, this is in relation to the three needs set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty to:

* eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act (2010).
* advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
* foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

We published our Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report in April 2021. This set out our Equality Outcomes for April 2021-2025. We published our [two-year progress report](https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/about-us/equality-diversity-and-human-rights/public-sector-equality-duty/) in April 2023.

This report contains the following:

* Progress with our Equality Outcomes since April 2023.
* How we are integrating the Equality Duty into our day-to-day work.
* How we have gathered and used employee information, including our gender pay gap.
* Reflections on our learning about how we have progressed our work to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty over the last four years.

# Progress with our Equality Outcomes

We identified eight equality outcomes in April 2021 and published a [report](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nes.scot.nhs.uk%2Fmedia%2Fyc5kaddy%2Fpublic-sector-equality-duty-april-2021-april-2023.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) on our progress in April 2023. We took the opportunity as NES developed a new organisational strategy for 2023-2026 to review these outcomes, ensure alignment and make some minor amendments. These amendments were approved by our Board and progress is reported under each outcome below.

**Outcome 1**: Our support for youth employment with a particular focus on engagement and supporting transitions from school, college and university for those further from the labour market or more likely to experience barriers to full employment: young people who are care-experienced, disabled, or from Black and minority ethnic or socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

This outcome covers a range of work in NES and predates the establishment of the NHS Scotland Academy and the Youth Academy, our Widening Access Framework and our Anchors Strategic Plan. NES’s Strategy 2023-2026 sets out a commitment to increase education and training and promote apprenticeships for young people to widen access to careers in health and social care.

The Youth Academy’s work is continuing to address the challenges around supporting young people to progress into careers in health and care. The Academy is focusing work on widening access to undergraduate medicine, working with universities, local authorities and other partners to identify and address the barriers.

NES organised a webinar and produced a resource for people supporting young carers which included information on working in health and social care, guidance for applications and interview preparation.

We set out progress under Equality Outcome 8b on improving recruitment outcomes in NES for young candidates, minority ethnic candidates and disabled candidates.

We have published an update on progress with our [Corporate Parenting Plan](https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/3bcp1fxe/corporate_parenting_progress_report_2024.pdf) (2018-2024) and continue to raise awareness of care-experienced people within our workforce.

We recognise the challenges in measuring progress with this outcome and reflect the learnings from this within this mainstreaming report.

**Outcome 2**: The proportion of refugee health professionals achieving professional registration and the number of international recruits attracted and supported into NHS Scotland is increased.

This outcome was amended from how it was originally published to reflect the difficulty for NES to measure progress in this work. We now include recognition of our work to attract and support international recruits into NHS Scotland and into social care roles.

NES previously supported the refuges doctor scheme, but this is now commissioned directly by Scottish Government to The Bridges Project.

Over 1000 international Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals have been supported into careers in NHS Scotland and 40 people have been supported into adult social care roles in Scotland. We are undertaking a survey to understand staff experiences and how this can be improved. Work with the social care sector has included providing robust pastoral support to ensure staff thrive and to embed ethical and sustainable person-centred international recruitment.

NES continues to work with the Scottish Refugee Council and partners to consider employment and education opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers. The Centre for Workforce Supply created a [Turas](https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/75481/international-recruitment-into-adult-social-care/information-for-employers-supporting-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-into-health-and-social-care-careers/refugee-employers-resource) site for employers to provide support on employing refugee and asylum seekers into health and social care roles.

The Centre for Workforce Supply (Health) has been working with Scottish Government and NHS Boards to co-ordinate and accelerate international recruitment in line with national targets. There are resources specifically for doctors and NHS Managers to support International Medical Graduates. The Centre for Workforce Supply (Social Care) has produced materials on Turas for employers and candidates, including information for employers to support refugees and asylum seekers into careers in health and social care.

NHS Scotland Academy provides support to internationally educated nurses and midwives newly recruited to NHS Scotland to pass a Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) Examination as part of the registration process to work independently in the UK. In collaboration with partners and NES’s Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Team, a digital learning resource on cultural humility was produced in 2023 to support positive values, attitudes and behaviours in the health and social care workforce.

**Outcome 3**: NES contributes towards reducing the UK-wide attainment gap for medical trainees from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds and International Medical Graduates by designing and monitoring evidence-informed activities.

We amended the wording on this outcome in 2023 to reflect this as a UK-wide issue which NES can contribute to but cannot achieve on its own.

The Advancing Equity in Medical Education Steering Group (AEMEG) continues to meet regularly to plan and deliver specific interventions that aim to address the differential attainment that exists in postgraduate medical education and training. The work that the group is undertaking is reported annually to the General Medical Council who report on UK data at [Tackling disadvantage in medical education.](https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/96887270_tackling-disadvantage-in-medical-education-020323.pdf)

Activities that NES has undertaken to address the issues that contribute to the attainment gap include:

* Enhanced induction from NES and in local health boards for International Medical Graduates.
* A reciprocal mentoring scheme.
* Analysis of the Scottish Trainee Scheme including feedback categorised by protected characteristics, including questions on experiences of discrimination.
* Training sessions on how to provide fair feedback to trainees were piloted and then rolled out across Scotland to support trainers with the tools to provide feedback in an inclusive and fair way.
* Data on outcomes for trainees by protected characteristic is provided to Speciality Training Boards to inform specific actions on any outliers in the data or where NES could provide further support.

The Scotland Deanery supports work in addressing the attainment gap through Associate Post-Graduate Deans for Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity and for International Medical Graduates.

Addressing the attainment gap continues to be a priority for NES and this outcome will continue in our new set of Equality Outcomes for 2025-2029.

**Outcome 4**: We will continue to enhance the inclusivity of education and training programmes for disabled learners in NHS Scotland through:

1. Expanding the availability of technology enhanced learning which reflects best practice in accessibility and increases flexibility in learning opportunities.

This outcome reflects the rapid shift that NES undertook during the Covid-19 pandemic when learning that had been delivered in an in-person format was adapted to be designed and delivered using online options. The Technology Enhanced Learning Team was established in late 2021 and continues to provide guidance and support to NES staff, to help equip them with the skills and confidence to design and deliver inclusive and accessible digital learning products that support a wide range of learners. The eLearning Team tests all NES eLearning modules to ensure that they meet the required accessibility standards and supports staff across NES who are involved in the design and development of eLearning modules.

We updated our [Inclusive Education and Learning Policy](https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/about-us/equality-diversity-and-human-rights/inclusive-education-and-learning/) in May 2023. This sets out our vision for equity in opportunity for health and social care colleagues in access to and experience of education and learning.

1. Establishing arrangements for reasonable adjustments passports for trainees under the Lead Employer programme.

NES has contributed to a Scottish Government national network for all NHS Staff to be supported in reasonable adjustments in the workplace, but this has to date not extended to a reasonable adjustment passport specifically for trainees. The network has agreed to create comprehensive best practice guidelines to support disabled staff and eliminate workplace barriers.

A refreshed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy has been launched across NHS Scotland, and this includes a reasonable adjustment guide. Passport functionality has been included in the development plans for the Turas platform.

  c. Providing holistic careers advice and person-centred support for disabled trainees through the Training, Wellbeing and Development Service.

We appointed a Senior Specialist Lead for Disability in April 2022 in recognition of the need to provide support to NES employed disabled doctors and dentists in training. The Training Wellbeing and Development Service continues to support trainees’ progress with their learning and support appropriate career choices. This includes tailored person-centred services such as advice on wellbeing, careers and signposting to specialist services. Increasing awareness among supervisors and educators has been an important part of this work. For example, webinars on neurodivergence have been delivered and shared by the Scotland Deanery. These are available on the Equality and Diversity Zone to provide learning to educators and increase understanding about neurodiversity in the workplace.

A network to support neurodivergent trainees has been established (named by the group as the ‘Neuro Bureau’). This provides peer support and the opportunity for advice and guidance from the NES Senior Specialist Lead on Disability.

**Outcome 5**: We support and develop the knowledge and skills required by our educators and designers to support accessible and inclusive learning. This will focus on accessibility and inclusion, digital solutions to support learning, culture and anti-racism knowledge and skills.

The wording on this outcome was amended following our two-year progress review to focuses on the key elements where we want to make a difference – the knowledge and skills of our educators.

The knowledge and skills of our educators is a key part of NES’s [Learning and Education Strategy](https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/news/nes-has-published-its-new-learning-and-education-strategy/), published in March 2024. An Educator Capabilities Framework has been developed and a core competency within the framework is in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This has the aim of ensuring all NES educators have the knowledge and support to: “Ensure all elements of learning from design through to improvement, learner admissions to feedback are inclusive, provide equality and value diversity.”

 As referenced under Outcome 4, the Technology Enhanced Learning Team continues to provide guidance and support to educators to consider accessibility, inclusion and digital solutions to support learners.

The Scotland Deanery has an updated section within the Training Development and Wellbeing Service on [sexual misconduct](https://www.scotlanddeanery.nhs.scot/trainee-development-and-wellbeing-service/sexual-misconduct-resources/). This includes guidance for trainees and a pledge to eradicate sexual misconduct and contribute to a culture that does not tolerate inappropriate behaviours, improve reporting mechanisms and ensure training is in place. NES’s equality team worked with Close the Gap and Equally Safe at Work to tailor an [e-learning module](https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/75201) on sexual harassment for line managers for the health and social care workforce. This was published on 26th April 2024.

NES staff are provided with a variety of learning opportunities to increase knowledge and skills on inclusion, accessibility, culture and anti-racism knowledge and skills. A corporate objective to increase understanding and self-reflection on anti-racism, equality, diversity and inclusion was introduced for all staff in 2023/24 and has continued, recognising the importance of for the NES workforce.

Examples of learning opportunities for staff include:

* Digital resources on anti-racism have been developed by NES’s Equality Team and ‘Let’s talk about anti-racism' sessions have been delivered during 2023-2025.
* Sessions on ‘Conscious Inclusion’ have been delivered, and the webinar is available on the Equality and Diversity Zone on Turas Learn for all staff to access.
* NHS Scotland Academy in collaboration with the NES Equality Team produced a digital learning resource on ‘Cultural Humility’ in November 2023.
* New resources on neurodivergence have been produced by NES’s Equality Team to increase awareness and understanding in the workforce.

**Outcome 6**: Our approach to digital design enables and facilitates equality and equity of access using digital and technology through the pillars of accessibility, accommodation, acceptability, availability, and affordability.

We revised this outcome following the two-year progress report. Outcome measures were developed to support the delivery of this outcome.

NES Technology Service plays a key role in digital and technology work and our success is dependent on applying technology to support people’s needs within services. The Service has met the duty to publish accessibility statements, and a programme of work is underway to update audits and publish statements to reflect the WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) to the WCAG 2.2 standards which came into effect in late 2023. Work continues on developing a framework to meet the Public Sector standard of WCAG 2.1.

The Testing Framework that NES Technology adopts contributes to

* equity in technology access,
* promoting digital inclusion, and
* highlights opportunities to remedy exclusion.

Equality scoping prompts have been developed to inform key technology considerations, mitigations, reasonable adjustments, differential attainment, and equality impacts for NES Technology Service to consider in our research design and delivery. An integrated project initiation form has been designed to collate outcomes of key impact assessments and information required to support technology design and delivery. The form includes the Children’s Rights Action Plan and emerging technology like Artificial Intelligence.

**Outcome 7**: We contribute to the development of an inclusive and diverse workplace culture through our national leadership and management programmes for health and social care managers and leaders.

NES builds in equality, diversity and inclusion into the design and delivery of management and leadership programmes. An EQIA for the National Leadership and Management Programmes and Resources was published in April 2024.

The Leading to Change team have developed a [Leading to Change Allyship Hub](https://leadingtochange.scot/allyship-hub/) to host learning resources and share best-practice guidance and stories from across the sectors about how to be a good ally in the workplace. This Hub is part of an ongoing Allyship Programme which aims to support leaders at all levels across social work, social care and health on their journey to become active allies. Leading to Change continues to run a blog series to highlight diverse voices across the sectors, with an accompanying “Diversity Coffee Connect” event series to offer the opportunity for discussion and reflection around topics connected to inclusion and diversity. A Diversity in Leadership Programme has been developed which includes support for aspiring leaders with protected characteristics as well as support for leaders at all levels to work together to improve diversity and inclusion in leadership. Leading to Change have partnered with the Ethnic Minority Forum to increase participation in leadership development programmes such as Adaptive Learning Sets. Leading to Change have also recorded podcasts with leadership programme alumni to discuss the application process and help it seem more accessible to a more diverse range of applicants.

The Managers/Leaders section on the [Equality and Diversity Zone](https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/75447) was reviewed and refreshed to help managers find relevant resources and specific training around equality, diversity and inclusion.

**Outcome 8**: NES is an inclusive employer, with:

1. Effective employee voice, including staff networks with effective influence on policy.

NES set up and supports the following staff networks:

* Under-represented Ethnic Minority Network
* Disability, Long-term Conditions, Mental Health and Neurodiversity Network
* Parent and Carers Network
* LGBT Network
* ‘Neuro-Bureau’ for NES employed doctors in training

Dedicated resource from NES’s Equality Team supports these networks. While there continues to be more to do to ensure that staff networks have effective influence on policy and practice, examples of what has been achieved to date include:

* Opportunity to shape NES’s Anti-Racism Action Plan and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2029.
* Achieving the ‘Established’ Level for the Carer Positive Award.
* Renewing our Disability Confident Award.
* Promoting Pride events and celebrating Black History Month and Disability History Month through learning session and speaker events.

We continue to promote membership to the networks across the organisation, including the important role that allies can play to the networks. Making sure network members are given the time to attend meetings and that the time and work of the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the networks is recognised is acknowledged as important and will continue in 2025.

NES has also started to work towards the Equally Safe at Work Employer accreditation. A staff survey was issued in early 2025 and focus groups with women working in lower paid grades took place in March 2025. This will provide the working group with data on women’s experience in the workplace and all staff’s perceptions on gender equality to inform our activities during 2025-26.

1. Improved recruitment outcomes for young candidates, minority ethnic candidates and disabled candidates.

The NES Equality and Diversity Workforce Report provides an annual report on our recruitment by protected characteristic. While there has been an increase in applications from candidates from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds over the last three years to 34.4% in 2023/2024 (24% in 2022/23; 20% in 2021/22) there is a differential likelihood of appointment relative to applicants from a White background. This may be due to work permits as 61% of applicants from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds advised that they required a work permit. This will continue to be monitored. Applications from 16–24-year-olds has reduced to 4.6% (6.6% in 2022/23; 6.5% in 2021/22) and applications from disabled candidates has remained at 8% over the last two years (9% in 2021/22). Work to support this outcome included a revision to the NES job packs, updated information on our website about our work on equality, diversity and inclusion, new e-learning modules on recruitment and guidance for recruitment panels on mitigating bias in the selection process.

Given that the delivery of this outcomes is mixed, we have included a focus on this in our Equality Outcomes for 2025-2029.  We recognise that there is more to be done to attract and improve the recruitment outcomes for younger people, disabled people and people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

1. An adaptable and flexible workforce with positive support for staff wellbeing.

The wellbeing of our staff is taken seriously in NES. A member of the Executive Team has lead responsibility for wellbeing in NES. A NES Wellbeing Matters Hub was established which provides a one stop shop for wellbeing resources. A variety of activities have taken place to work towards this outcome including:

* Regular NES Menopause meet ups and guidance for line managers, including reasonable adjustments.
* An internal NES Coaching for Wellbeing service with a pool of NES qualified coaches. This enables staff to receive up to two hours of wellbeing coaching.
* A guided journaling monthly offering to staff with a theme to connect this to other wellbeing events.
* Facilitating live monthly events from external organisations such as the Osteoporosis Lydia Plus Project, Breathing Space, Cycling Scotland, and Diabetes UK.
* Raising awareness for health promotion campaigns such as World Menopause Day, World Mental Health Day, National Fitness Day, Back Care Week, World Sepsis Day, World Suicide Prevention Day, Cycling to Work Day, Alcohol Awareness Week, Men’s Health Week, Mental Health Awareness Week, and Stress Awareness Month.
* Offering mindfulness taster sessions in partnership with our OD colleagues at NHS Services Scotland.
* Monthly newsletter with topical articles and themes, highlighting the ways staff can access support, learn about wellbeing events and stay connected with colleagues across the organisation.
* Stay connected with an internal NES Wellbeing Matters social space online community via MS Teams. This is an open forum whereby all staff can interact with posts about campaigns, stay up-to-date with events, and most importantly have a safe place where they can ask questions and reach out for support.
* Sharing engaging communications around different times of year, including NES Wellbeing Matters Advent Calendar to promote the different elements of the internal wellbeing offer.

# How we are integrating the Equality Duty into our day-to-day work

‘Mainstreaming equality’ according to the EHRC Guidance means “integrating equality into the day-to-day working of an authority.” Our Equality Outcomes set out above reflect a broad range of our functions and demonstrate progress in how we have been integrating equality across our work.

NES’s focus is to build careers, lives and future sustainability of the health and social care workforce through a focus on people, partnerships and performance. We set out examples under each of these of how NES has contributed to

* eliminating discrimination, harassment and other unlawful conduct;
* advancing equality of opportunity and
* to fostering good relations since our last progress report in April 2023.

**People**

A range of training and awareness raising sessions on equality, diversity and inclusion has been offered to NES staff and to the wider health and social care workforce. This has included promoting materials as part of Race Equality Week during 2024 and 2025; webinars on ‘conscious inclusion’, neurodiversity and reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

* Over 180 staff have attended ‘Let’s talk about anti-racism’ sessions in 2024, using the anti-racism digital resources produced by NES to support learning and understanding about how to take an anti-racist approach.
* The Scotland Deanery has developed guidance for educators to respond to disclosures of sexual harassment and on relationships at work. These have been extended so they are relevant to all NES staff and a wide range of professional groups to support staff and learners.
* Questions on discrimination and sexual harassment were included in the Scottish Trainee Survey in 2024 to understand experiences in the workplace.
* Our staff networks continue to meet regularly to provide the opportunity for peer support and to highlight issues for the organisation to consider in progressing equality, diversity and inclusion.
* Inclusion and equipping our educators on equality, diversity and inclusion is central to delivering NES’s Learning and Education Strategy, published in 2024.
* A new staff survey to measure inclusion in NES was introduced in 2024 and the findings are analysed by protected characteristic.
* We continue to share news, resources and relevant discussion items on the Equality and Human Rights SharePoint Hub and via the community of interest (a Teams channel).
* All staff in NES, including the Executive Team, have a learning objective on anti-racism, equality, diversity and inclusion. This aims to ensure our people keep their knowledge and understanding relevant and up to date.
* We are working towards Equally Safe at Work accreditation to progress gender equality in the workplace.

**Partnerships**

* NES produced a new learning module on equality, diversity and human rights in December 2023, working with our partners in health and social care to develop the content. To date over 19,000 learners have completed the module from a wide range of sectors.
* The NHS Scotland Academy in partnership with the NES Equality Team and others in health and social care produce a cultural humility digital resource. This aims to support positive values, attitudes and behaviours in the health and social care workforce.
* The Centre for Workforce Supply has developed a suite of resources for the medical workforce to help them welcome and provide support to International Medical Graduates living and working in Scotland.
* Together with people with lived experience, NES has developed resources to support an awareness and understanding about neurodiversity in the workplace.
* The NES Equality Team have established a new network for trainers on equality and diversity to bring colleagues working across health and social care together to share resources, identify common learning needs and avoid duplication.
* A Knowledge and Skills Framework on Transgender Care was produced for NHS Staff in collaboration with a range of staff and people with lived experience. This was in recognition of the need to provide training at appropriate levels for NHS staff to improve transgender health care.
* The Scotland Deanery has developed and promoted resources to prevent sexual harassment and misconduct with resources available on the Training Wellbeing Support Unit and e-learning promoted to all educational supervisors.
* NES’s Equality Team is working with the Business Disability Forum and the Scottish Government Health Directorate to plan training sessions for NHS Staff and promote the resources that are available through NHS Scotland’s membership.

**Performance**

* NES consider the equality impacts of our financial savings as part of planning our budgets.
* Strategic Key Performance Indicators have been introduced to report NES’s progress in the delivery of NES’s Strategy 2023-2026. This includes indicators on gender, disability and ethnic minority pay gaps, diversity in the workforce and on perceptions of NES as an inclusive organisation.
* NES Technology Service has measures in place to consider the impact of digital inclusion and accessibility in the development, design and testing of products.
* An Equality Impact Assessment is being built into proposals to inform the Turas Learn Platform refresh.

Two ‘mainstreaming equality’ outcomes were identified in 2021 to support NES integrate equality into its functions:

1. Improving our Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) performance, ensuring a systematic approach to using EQIA to inform the development of new workstreams.

We refreshed our EQIA guidance during 2024 and continue to support our staff to undertake EQIAs and embed these into programme and policy planning and development. EQIAs are published on the NES website and progress is overseen by the Equality and Human Rights Steering Group.

The Equality Team offer monthly drop-in sessions to provide advice and support to staff on EQIAs. Training sessions are planned for 2025/26 as part of NES’s programme of learning and education on equality, diversity, and inclusion. Robust EQIAs require staff to have access to relevant evidence and a knowledge base on equality and diversity issues, including the Public Sector Equality Duty.

2. Building capacity - both technical and educational - to deliver accessible digital learning.

This is an important way that NES is mainstreaming equality into our work. Progress in this area has been reported under Equality Outcomes 4 and 5 and the activities set out above.

# How we have gathered and used employee information, including our gender pay gap.

We publish an annual [workforce monitoring report](https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/about-us/equality-diversity-and-human-rights/employment-equality-monitoring-and-equal-pay/) on equality and diversity and this is published on our [website](https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/about-us/equality-diversity-and-human-rights/employment-equality-monitoring-and-equal-pay/). This information helps us to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

We encourage staff to update their equality and diversity information on the HR system and had a particular focus on disability as we recognise that there is likely to be under-reporting. There is more work to do, and we will continue to raise the profile of this in 2025/2026.

We published an Equal Pay Statement and actions to address the gender pay gap in April 2021. The Board is updated annually as part of the Strategic Key Performance Indicators on gender, disability and ethnicity pay gaps.

We have reviewed the Equal Pay Statement and progress with the actions published as part of the Statement in April 2021. We have published a new Equal Pay Statement on our website. This includes information on occupational segregation in relation to sex, disability and ethnicity.

# Procurement and the Public Sector Equality Duty

Public authorities in Scotland have a specific duty relating to their procurement function. This duty has two key elements:

* Public authorities must have due regard in procurement activities to whether the award criteria should include considerations to better enable it to meet the Equality Duty.
* Public authorities must have due regard in procurement activities to whether contracts or agreements should include stipulations which would better enable it to meet the equality duty.

NES recognise that our activities influence the society in which we work, and our procurement strategy is committed to achieving environmental, social and economic aims that tackle these effects.

NES is committed to ensuring a high standard of ethical and sustainable trade practices across its commissioning and procurement activities. The NES Ethical Procurement Policy sets out our expectations about our standards. NES requires all direct suppliers and contractors to observe the provisions of the policy and requires that suppliers and contractors, in turn obtain similar compliance with its provisions from their suppliers and contractors.

In addition, the Suppliers Sustainability Code of Conduct is available on our website to support our work to progress equality.

In relation to our education and training role, all our invitations to tender documentation and contracts include the suite of NES standards to support inclusive education.

NES Technology Service has established digital development guidelines, with equality and diversity requirements embedded, and aligned to all relevant legislation including the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

The Knowledge Services Team established the eBooks procurement framework for publishers to support purchasing of eBooks in a variety of fonts, text sizes and viewing formats which support better access and accessibility to suit user needs.

An annual report is provided to our Finance and Performance Management Committee on how we are meeting the public sector equality duty in relation to our procurement activities.

# Reflections on our learning about how we have progressed our work to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty over the last 4 years.

This report covers our work over the last two years on how we are meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty and our progress in delivering the Equality Outcomes we published in April 2021. This has provided the opportunity to reflect on lessons learned over this last four years. Some key learnings have been:

* The importance of having robust performance management arrangements in place with a lead responsible officer identified to deliver activities towards equality outcomes.
* Identify measures to track progress towards equality outcomes.
* The importance of leadership to cultivate an inclusive workplace culture. For example, the values, behaviours and support for equality, diversity, and inclusion activities in NES from the Executive Team and the Board.
* Governance of equality and diversity to ensure it is given the appropriate scrutiny by the Board.
* The need to provide line managers with the appropriate guidance, tools, and training to support inclusive, diverse and equitable workplace for our people.
* Training and education on equality, diversity, and inclusion topics, including the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Fairer Scotland Duty and issues relevant to the workplace and to delivering rights-based health and care to people.
* Related to the above, it is important to avoid assumptions about knowledge and understanding across the workforce on equality and diversity issues. We need to make sure we meet people where they are and tailor support to make it relevant to roles and responsibilities.
* The value and importance of staff networks to provide peer support, raise key topics, act as a source of lived experience and feedback and provide allyship.
* The key role for NES in supporting educators with the right knowledge and skills to support learners and demonstrate leadership for equality, diversity and inclusion.
* The importance of supporting staff with EQIAs and the need to promote this as a core part of planning and evaluation activity.
* Regular engagement with staff and learners on progress with the NES Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy.

NES has developed its Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy for 2025-2029. This incorporates how we will meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, including our specific Equality Outcomes. An action plan has been developed to support delivery of the strategy. The action plan will be reviewed annually in partnership with our staff and learners to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate to support the delivery of NES’s functions.

April 2025