

# Research and Innovation Plan











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### Introduction

Our purpose in NES is to be a collaborative, innovative and inclusive learning organisation providing high quality education, training, workforce development, workforce data and technology for Scotland's health and social care workforce.

Our strategic vision is to support better rights-based quality care and outcomes for every person in Scotland through a skilled, capable and resilient health and social care workforce.

We are adaptable, creative and responsive to the needs of the workforce and the communities we serve.

We are firmly committed to improving population health, reducing health inequalities and working nationally and locally with partners to make a positive and lasting impact to improving the wellbeing of the people of Scotland.

We work with the Scottish Government, local government, NHS Scotland Boards, health and social care partnerships, social care providers, academia, regulators and other strategic partners to create new roles and services and develop new and exciting career pathways for future generations.

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.

In May 2023, NES published <u>Our Strategy</u> 2023–26 outlining our strategic intent, centred around the themes of people, partnerships and performance (newsletters. nes.digital/corporate-strategies/corporate-strategy-2023-26).

To support our transformation, we have developed the **Research and Innovation Plan**, which outlines an initial set of key actions in the context of the NES Our Strategy document and our medium-term plan for 2023–26.

They are cross-cutting areas of work which impact on all 3 of our strategic themes – people, partnerships and performance – and require participation and engagement from all NES directorates.

The Research and Innovation Plan outlines how we will work with our staff, learners, partners and stakeholders to deliver our ambitions for research and innovation, using technology and innovation to improve education and learning and create a better and more sustainable future for health and social care.

In delivering our research and innovation outcomes, we will be intentional in our approach to:

- + Collaborate
- + Engage
- + Connect
- + Share knowledge
- + Learn from mistakes
- + Celebrate progress

Implementation of the Research and Innovation Plan will ensure that the research and innovation agenda directly supports the NES corporate strategy, emphasising the development of the health and social care workforce, fostering strategic partnerships, and enhancing performance to benefit Scotland's population.

As we progress through our transformation in NES, the Research and Innovation Plan will be added to, and built upon, to deliver our strategic intent.

The Research and Innovation Plan will continue to be informed as we progress and deepen our understanding of what is most important to our staff, learners, trainees and partners and how we can maximise our impact through research and innovation on our health and social care system.

Over the coming years, we will measure and report publicly on the success of our research and innovation activities through our strategic key performance indicators and progress reports against our annual delivery and medium-term plans.



# What we mean by research and innovation

NES aligns with shared working definitions of **research** and **innovation**, enhancing the commitment within the NES Our Strategy 2023–26 to drive efficacy and responsiveness in meeting workforce and population needs through the development and application of research and innovation.

A whole system and interdisciplinary approach to research and innovation across the organisation both acknowledges and provides further opportunities to augment existing activities.

The Research and Innovation Plan is a complement to the <u>NES Learning and Education Strategy 2023–26</u> (nes.scot.nhs. uk/media/hwdneqnw/nes\_learning\_and\_education\_strategy\_2023-2026.pdf).

Both are framed by the NES Our Strategy 2023–26, with the intention that iterative development of the Research and Innovation Plan will align with the development of future NES corporate strategy from 2026.

1. <u>Scotland's National Innovation Strategy</u>, The Scottish Government, 2023 This publication is available at <u>www.gov.scot</u>

# Shared NES working definitions of research and innovation

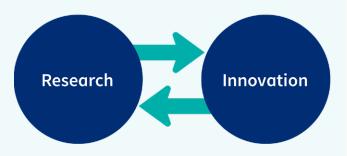
#### Research

"... the attempt to derive generalised or transferable new knowledge to answer or refine relevant questions with scientifically sound methods."

This excludes audits of practice and service evaluation.

#### Innovation1

"The introduction of a new or significantly improved product, service, process, or method with the purpose of helping to solve social challenges or delivering economic growth."



### Why we need a research and innovation plan

NES operates within a continually changing environment and a health and social care system which is facing unprecedented challenges.

The Research and Innovation Plan complements a range of NES strategies and plans that drive our strategic vision to support better rights-based quality care and outcomes for every person in Scotland through a skilled, capable, and resilient health and social care workforce.

We are proud to be an organisation which constantly strives to deliver high-quality public services for the people of Scotland.

We recognise that to be successful in delivering the NES Our Strategy, maximising our contribution within a health and social care sector which is reliant upon reform to ensure its sustainability, we must work differently as an organisation; ensuring staff feel heard, valued and supported in their endeavours.

We are therefore committed to evolving, with people and partners at the heart of our research and innovation to ensure we can support the health and social care workforce of tomorrow to deliver improved outcomes for our population.





### What we aim to achieve

Through the Research and Innovation Plan and our collaborative approach, our vision is to support better rights-based quality care and outcomes for every person in Scotland through a skilled, capable and resilient health and social care workforce.

We will achieve this by participating in high quality research and innovation across NES, using the Research and Innovation Plan to quide our shared ambitions.

The Research and Innovation Plan has been developed using the 4 broad principles listed to achieve our shared ambitions across NES.

# Broad principles to achieve our shared ambitions across NES



The Research and Innovation Plan is an important contributor to NES's planning and delivery, from the perspective of the Board, its partners and key stakeholders.



**The plan** is relevant to those working within the organisation, is accessible and engaging to those who may be less experienced in this area.



**The plan** offers additional cohesion to a complex work arena, providing touch points to share learning, avoid duplication and minimise non-value adding activity.



**The approach** set out in the plan is relevant to all research and innovation activities, offering guidance and resource at varied points.

# With a focus on people, partnerships and performance we will:

- + Develop a cohesive, high-quality approach to research and innovation in NES
- Support the development and delivery of top-tier learning experiences for our staff, learners, partners and service users, ensuring a consistently excellent experience now and in the future
- Demonstrate improved organisational efficiency and effectiveness by aligning our research and innovation activity with the principles of the NES Our Strategy, fostering a culture of continuous improvement

The Research and Innovation Plan has a strong focus on pedagogy and workforce diversification with an aim to advance teaching, learning, assessment and scholarship in NES including:

- + Developing new knowledge
- + Improving pedagogical practices
- + Supporting more effective learning and teaching approaches
- + Developing the health and social care workforce to meet population need
- + Preparing workforce for new and emerging skills and capabilities
- + Enhancing assessment approaches
- + Ensuring access to high quality learning environments







These are the **key considerations** that have been critical in the development of the Research and Innovation Plan:

As well as integrating the key considerations throughout this plan, teams will also be encouraged to take account of these as they embark on and develop new research and innovation workstreams across NES.



Research ethics



Regulations and standards



Data privacy and security



**People** 



Knowledge sharing



Cost



Inclusivity and accessibility



Knowledge and skills



Pace of innovation



Human factors



Strategic alignment



Impact planning and outcomes



Horizon scanning



Research capacity



Reporting



Evaluation / quality improvement

### How we will get there

To deliver the ambitions and intent set out in the NES Our Strategy 2023–26 and address the challenges faced by the health and social care system, we have committed to an organisational programme of transformational change and corporate improvement which will ensure we remain 'fit for the future'.

Our transformational journey has been outlined in <u>Delivering Our Strategy:</u>

<u>A Transformation Route Map</u> (nes.scot.nhs. uk/media/cm3epbvd/nesd1845\_delivering\_ our\_strategy\_a-\_transformation\_route\_ map.pdf).

The transformation route map underpins the delivery of our medium-term plan and annual delivery plans and is supported by our organisational development plan. The Research and Innovation Plan builds upon our strategic commitment to:

- + Build capacity by working with our partners and those with lived and living experience of health and social care services to shape our education, training and resources
- + Connect and collaborate, by building relationships and extending our reach nationally and internationally to innovate and learn from research and practice, adding value where it is most needed
- + Cultivate capabilities, to build careers and a sustainable workforce which is fit for the future, both within NES and the wider health and social care system; anticipating and responding to the impact of technological and workforce innovations
- + Continue to develop our culture of being inclusive and reflecting our values and behaviours in all that we do to support, empower and value our staff, partners, trainees and learners



### **Capacity**

Informed learning and workforce capacity



### Collaboration

For cohesion, efficacy and economy of outcomes



### Capability

Clinical and care capability and effectiveness



### Culture

Culture that enables, transforms and maintains currency of skills and capabilities Contextualising these commitments within research and innovation, it is critical that our related workstreams focus on capacity, collaboration, capability and culture. This is required across NES, the health and social care and education and skills systems that we work within.

Implementing our Research and Innovation Plan will be critical in inspiring our people, instilling confidence in our stakeholders and creating the momentum to move research and innovation activity at pace.

We will progress our Research and Innovation Plan through 5 priority actions which set out the deliverables that staff, learners, trainees, partners and the people of Scotland can expect as we deliver on our strategic intent.

# Research and Innovation Plan priority actions



### **Priority action 1**

Review research and innovation governance



### **Priority action 2**

Foster internal collaboration in research and innovation



### **Priority action 3**

Align research and innovation themes with current NES strategies and the emerging NES strategies from 2026



### **Priority action 4**

Harness external research and innovation strategic partnerships



### **Priority action 5**

Monitor and evaluate impact of research and innovation

During the first 12 months, we will focus on sharing and building our change story for research and innovation and engaging people with it, building the capacity and capability in the organisation and delivering critical building blocks in our strategic journey through these priority actions.

When brought together, these priority actions will deliver the significant step change we seek to maximise our research and innovation contribution and the positive impact we can make to the people of Scotland, our partners and in the performance of our organisation.

We will engage proactively with all involved to encourage collective ownership of research and innovation as we seek to streamline processes and systems, cutting across functional boundaries and creating 'Once for NES' approaches.

Additional detail of these can be found on Appendix 3.



## What you will see

Our Research and Innovation Plan will support NES in providing high quality education, training, workforce development, workforce data and technology for Scotland's health and social care workforce.

Through our research and innovation activities, you will see our current strengths being consolidated and built upon, and people at all levels of our organisation being developed and involved in research and innovation. Appendix 2 details expected and sequential outcomes.

Following approval and publication of the NES Our Strategy 2023–26, the development of a suite of enabling strategies and plans to underpin implementation has been identified as a priority.

The <u>NES Learning and Education Strategy</u> 2023–26 is one of these enabling strategies and sets the direction for NES in fulfilling its overall purpose and vision through learning, education and training (nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/hwdneqnw/nes\_learning\_and\_education\_strategy\_2023-2026.pdf).

The purpose of the Learning and Education Strategy – as the first strategy of its kind for NES – is to support transformational change in the longer term, in addition to setting the priorities for delivery within the current strategic cycle (2023–26). A key priority within the NES Learning and Education Strategy is working in partnership. NES will engage in partnership working in research and innovation by:

- + Systematically extending and prioritising partnership working and collaboration across the system to deliver more, together
- + Broadening and deepening strategic engagements with our partners, making our purpose and vision clear and identifying synergies
- + Partnering with organisations providing insights into health and social care research and innovation and seeking to understand and support these through learning and education, including technologies for improved care quality and availability. We will use these insights to drive innovation alongside our partners
- Ensuring a structured and corporate approach to strategic partnership formation, development, evaluation and review ensuring we get the best impact from our work with other organisations.
   There will be clear links between our strategy, key performance indicators and our partnerships

Working in partnership, the Research and Innovation Plan will support the delivery of key areas from the NES Our Strategy 2023-26:

# Education, training and workforce development

The main responsibility for NES is to develop and deliver education and training for the NHS in Scotland, together with a similarly important role in relation to social care and social work. This includes undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing professional development. NES extends its offer and reach to support other public bodies through a range of collaborative activities.

NES will work with the Scottish Government, health and social care sector, academia and regulators to develop new leadership and innovation programmes; support succession planning and talent management; and create new education and training routes that meet the needs of our population.

NES will explore new models of education and training, in collaboration with partners, across health and social care disciplines. NES will also support acceleration of skills development in areas key to service transformation including leadership, digital and data.

### Data, intelligence and workforce supply

NES is the official provider of workforce statistics and strategic delivery partner of the Scottish Government on technology and information resources. Over the next 3 years, NES will target skills development in digital and seek to improve the range, quality, detail, analysis and reporting of workforce data.

Building on the role of the Centre for Workforce Supply, NES will work collaboratively with health, social care and academic partners to utilise population health and workforce data. This will enable data informed workforce planning, service redesign, new models of care and creation of new roles and qualifications.

#### **Educational research**

NES will focus on becoming a world class organisation for education, training and learning, working with partners and collaborating with the broader system, to build research capacity within the health and social care system. Key partners such as the Chief Scientist Office further enable NES's activity and outcomes.

NES will focus on educational research and knowledge services, including the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education; to shape the future of learning within health and social care and ensure best practice can be adopted across the sector. NES will also research how technology can improve the education and training of the health and social care workforce, encompassing both paid and volunteer roles.

### Digital innovation and delivery

To support delivery of Scotland's Digital Health and Care Strategy (a joint initiative between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), NES will use technology to improve health and social care services in Scotland, working collaboratively with partners. This includes building digital solutions and using cloud-based services to support better outcomes for the people of Scotland and address inequalities.

NES will develop a national digital platform that integrates data, intelligence and applications, delivering a digital front door to make it easier for people to access services and information.

NES aims to help health and social care staff work more efficiently and effectively by providing them with the information they need. NES will also work collaboratively as part of Accelerated National Innovation Adoption (ANIA) to assess and scale innovation, supporting the sustainability of NHS Scotland.



It is important to note the iterative nature of these key strategic areas from the NES Our Strategy 2023–26. We have identified 5 research and innovation themes that will support our continuous commitment to sharpen and deepen our practice and approaches in these areas.

The 5 key research and innovation plan themes we will focus on in 2025–26 are shown in the diagram opposite.

More detail on each of these themes will be available as the Research and Innovation Plan is implemented.

Research and Innovation Plan themes								
1	2	3	4	5				
Emergent education, training and development	Workforce diversification and learner pathways	Learning environment	Emergent Tech / Ed Tech and Al	Research and innovation capacity				
Curriculum development	Role transformation	Inter-professional learning	Simulation and extended reality	Knowledge and skills mobilisation				
Continuous professional development	Human factors in skills development	Personalised training	Workforce data and learning analytics	Research and innovation leadership				
Learning design and delivery	Role diversification	Remote learning, supervision and assessment	AI in learning design, delivery and assessment	Specialist learning, opportunities and mentorship				

Capacity ➤ Capability ➤ Culture ➤ Collaboration



# **Getting involved**

A significant amount of work has been undertaken to support the development of the Research and Innovation Plan by colleagues from across NES.

To date we have focused mainly on internal communications, through the establishment of the NES Research and Innovation Reference Group.

We will continue to:

- Explore how working collaboratively, with partners at local, regional and system levels can broaden our reach and contribution to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland
- Provide regular updates and progress reports to keep staff informed and involved
- + Foster a positive and inclusive organisational culture to the delivery of the Research and Innovation Plan

### **Educator capability framework**

The NES educator capability framework illustrates routes for staff at varied stages to enhance skill and capability, from informed to specialist practice. The framework makes these specific and helpful reference to educational research and learning design, foundations for research and innovation:

#### **Educational research**

Systematically examining education and learning processes, including research into how technology can improve the education and training of the workforce.

### **Learning design**

Methodically crafting learning experiences based on sound educational theories, and ensuring learning outcomes are achieved.





# Our Research and Innovation Plan

# What it means for the health and social care workforce

Learners will experience increased relevance and focus across all types of learning, aligning more closely with their needs, career aspirations and the challenges and opportunities of working in health and social care in their communities. They will benefit from a consistently high-quality learning experience and improved recognition and portability of their learning.

### What it means for partners

Our partners will have greater clarity on the totality of the research and innovation offer provided by NES, how this supports their organisational objectives and underpins the delivery of high-quality health and social care services. They will have more opportunities to influence our research and innovation priorities.

#### What it means for our staff

Our staff will see consistent structures for decision making, clearer business processes and the right information to inform the development, approval and enhancement of research and innovation.

They will benefit from being part of a learning organisation, where learning and good practice is shared at individual, team, organisational and systems levels. Staff will benefit from appropriate development opportunities and a more systematic approach to bringing people together to reflect and develop their practice alongside peers. They will be supported to deliver research and

innovation that has a positive impact on the quality of care delivered to the people of Scotland.

We will have a cohesive, high-quality approach to research and innovation in NES. This will support the development and delivery of top-tier learning experiences for our staff, learners, partners and service users, ensuring a consistently excellent experience now and in the future. We will have improved organisational efficiency and effectiveness by aligning our research and innovation with the principles of the NES Our Strategy and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

### What it means for the people of Scotland

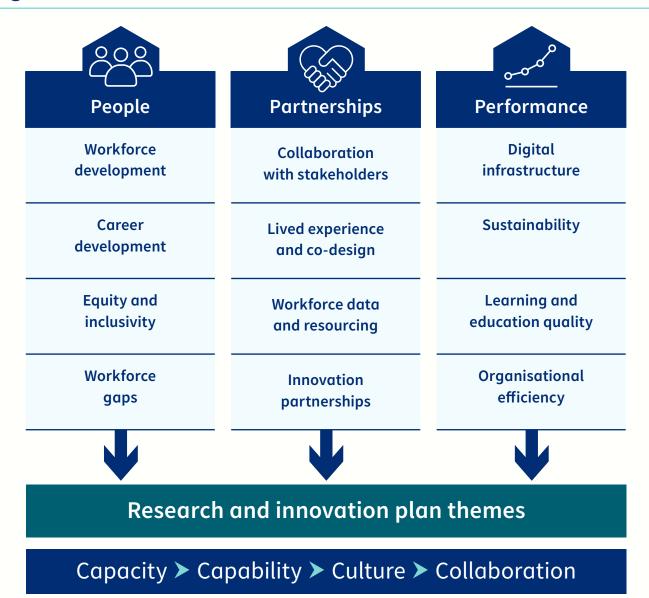
People who use health and social care services will be confident that the workforce understands what is important to them and have the right knowledge, skills and competencies to provide high-quality and person-centred care. There is a strong correlation between the relevance and quality of education and the delivery of high-quality care.

### The impact NES delivers through research and innovation

In summary and to emphasise, a focus on people, partnerships and performance we will:

- + Develop a cohesive, high-quality approach to research and innovation in NES
- Support the development and delivery of top-tier learning experiences for our staff, learners, partners and service users, ensuring a consistently excellent experience now and in the future
- Demonstrate improved organisational efficiency and effectiveness by aligning our research and innovation activity with the principles of the NES Strategy, fostering a culture of continuous improvement

Some of the areas of impact we will monitor in relation to themes of people, partnerships and performance are highlighted on the diagram opposite.



## Appendix 1: NES Research and Innovation Plan on a page

# Key considerations for best practice in research and innovation

- + Research ethics
- + Knowledge sharing
- + Pace of innovation
- + Horizon scanning
- + Regulation and standards
- + Cost
- + NES capability
- + Research capability
- + Data privacy and security
- + Inclusivity and accessibility
- + Strategic alignment
- + Reporting
- + Knowledge and skills
- + Impact planning
- + Evaluation and outcomes

# We support these research and innovation themes

- + Emergent education, training and development
- + Workforce diversification and learner pathways
- + Learning environment
- + Emergent technology / educational technology and artificial intelligence
- + Research and innovation capacity

# We will work with these partners on research and innovation

- + NHS Scotland Boards
- + Social care organisations
- + Health and social care workforce
- + Scotland's population
- + Universities and colleges
- + National organisations
- + Industry partners
- + Third sector partners
- + The Scottish
  Government

# Priority actions 1 to 5

- Review research and innovation governance
- 2 Foster internal collaboration in research and innovation
- 3 Align research and innovation themes with current NES strategies and the emerging NES strategies
- 4 Harness external research and innovation strategic partnerships
- S Monitor and evaluate impact of research and innovation

# Intended outcomes

Ensure that the research and innovation agenda directly supports NES's corporate strategy.

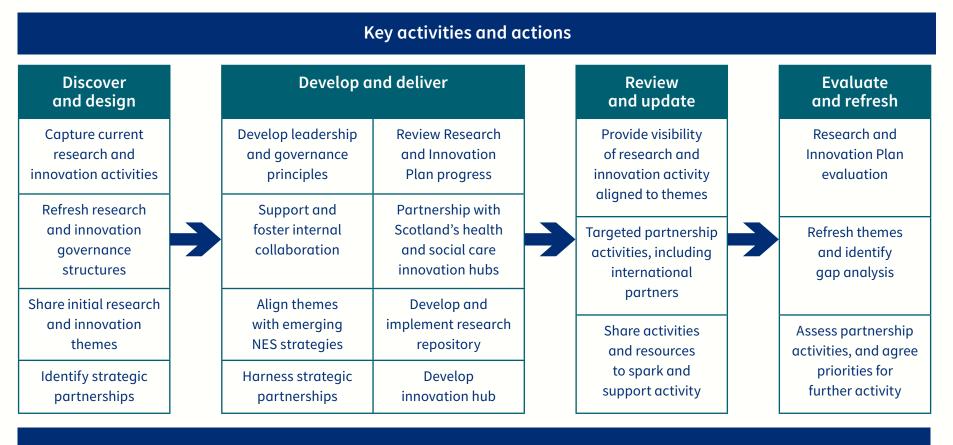
Ensure that it also emphasises the development of the health and social care workforce.

Ensure that it fosters strategic partnerships, and enhances performance to benefit Scotland's population.

Capacity ➤ Capability ➤ Culture ➤ Collaboration

### **Appendix 2: NES research and innovation outcomes**

Expected and sequential outcomes are shown below. Future versions will show reportable activity for priority actions and themes.



Monitor and evaluate the impact of research and innovation activities, including equity and inclusion approaches

### Appendix 3: Actions to support the implementation of the Research and Innovation Plan

We will deliver the Research and Innovation Plan through 5 priority actions which set out the deliverables that staff, learners, trainees, partners and the people of Scotland can expect as we deliver on our strategic intent.



### Priority action 1: Review research and innovation governance

- + We will implement robust governance mechanisms to oversee the development, implementation and evaluation of the research and innovation agenda, ensuring accountability and alignment with organisational priorities
- + Research and innovation governance is the broad range of regulations, principles, processes and standards of good practice that exist to assure and continuously improve, quality across all aspects of research and innovation for health and social care. NES requires new governance arrangements to support diverse research, research-related activities and new approaches to innovation
- + The new arrangements will support the synergistic relationship between research and innovation, while respecting their distinctiveness and acknowledging the role of research in inspiring and supporting innovation



# Priority action 1: Review research and innovation governance

To enable the conditions described, 5 actions have been identified.

### Action 1.1 | Review the purposes of research and innovation governance

The purposes of research and innovation governance are numerous including:

- + Safeguarding participants in research and innovation activities and the users of innovation outputs
- + Ensuring alignment with NES and national strategic priorities for research and innovation in health and social care
- + Ensuring accountability for research and innovation performance and quality
- + Promoting and supporting good practice in research and innovation
- + Ensuring activities are adequately resourced and provide value for money
- + Ensuring the outputs and outcomes from research and innovation activities are appropriately disseminated and evidence is translated into practice

### Action 1.2 Define the scope of research and innovation governance

Governance arrangements will be inclusive of diverse activities that meet NES respective definitions of research and innovation. It is expected that the specific arrangements will be differentiated to recognise the distinctive features and requirements of research and innovation activities.

### **Action 1.3** Agree NES-wide governance principles

NES governance structures, processes and practice for research and innovation should be based on a set of agreed principles. NES current Research Governance Policy is based on 14 principles derived from the UK Framework for Health and Social Care Research. The principles underpinning research and innovation will need to balance the interests of participants, patients, clients, service providers, the people of Scotland, partner organisations and NES staff.



### Priority action 1: Review research and innovation governance

### Action 1.4 Develop key governance processes (sign-off, registration, ethical approval, reporting)

A key focus for research and innovation governance will be the processes that support the purposes, including those set out at priority action 1.1. The governance processes will differ for research and innovation, respecting the requirements in each area. It is expected that research and innovation should share similar processes in some areas (e.g., sign-off of proposals, registration and reporting).

### Action 1.5 Define responsibilities and accountabilities

Responsibilities for NES current research governance are distributed to directorates and individual researchers. Oversight is through a corporate Research Register and an annual Research Governance Report. For innovation projects, governance is mainly in the form of business processes (annual planning and corporate radar) and programme governance (contracts, MOUs, programme boards and reference groups) with the support of the NHS Scotland Academy, Learning and Innovation Directorate.

The NES Research and Innovation Plan will need to clarify the responsibilities and accountabilities of individual researchers / innovation leads, directorate teams, the NES Executive Team, cross-directorate groups (e.g., the Education and Quality Executive Group or new groups to support research and innovation) and the Education and Quality Committee. The plan will also clarify the extent to which governance responsibilities should be distributed.



### Priority action 2: Foster internal collaboration in research and innovation

- + We will collaborate and work cohesively within teams and across NES to develop inclusive and comprehensive research and innovation workstreams that address the needs of the health and social care workforce and align with organisational goals
- + Implementing a clear system of management, governance and support, NES will cultivate a culture of research and innovation engagement and participation across all levels of the organisation. This will ensure that NES staff understand how their activities contribute to research and / or innovation. It will ensure that teams understand how NES actions directly support the wider health and social care sector to applying research and innovation in response to population demand

To enable the conditions described above, 4 actions have been identified. Whilst work towards these aims may take place concurrently, the activities will build upon each other in sequence.

### Action 2.1 | Build workforce research and innovation capability and capacity

Our Strategy 2023–26 notes ambition to be a world class organisation for education, training and learning, working with the Office of the Chief Scientist to the Scottish Government, as well as other partners, to build research capacity within the health and social care system.

Building up and understanding of the skills, knowledge and behaviours required to enhance research and innovation activity in the wider workforce will help direct NES activity in this area.

Actions to support workforce research and innovation capacity and capability include (but not exclusively):

- + Training and support (e.g., ethics, governance and publishing)
- + Online learning modules
- + Research and innovation workshops, peer support and networks
- + Education and training to support use of specific emergent educational technologies (EdTech) / workforce innovation
- + Undertake initial assessment of current NES research capacity and capability



### Priority action 2: Foster internal collaboration in research and innovation

### Action 2.1 | Build workforce research and innovation capability and capacity (continued)

With regard to innovation, existing tools and learning resources are available to support workforce adaptation to changing population needs. Within NES, action will support an organisational understanding of innovation recognising the importance of adopting emergent educational technologies, innovative approaches to addressing workforce challenges and how to progress from new and emerging approaches to embedding as routine activity.

### Action 2.2 | Build career pathways for NES research and innovation staff

To support the NES research and innovation workforce, there is ambition to further progress career and leadership pathways with a focus on research and innovation.

### Action 2.3 | Establish the research and innovation systems and culture

Activities to support this area include:

- + Communication and promotion of research and innovation opportunities
- + Planned activity regarding infrastructure and governance features within priority action 1

### Action 2.4 | Ensure research and innovation activities and resources are visible, embedded and understood

To ensure that activities and resources are visible, embedded and understood, deliverable actions include:

- + Develop and use a research template to share work
- + Develop and implement a research repository
- + Share activities and resources via researcher profiles (website) and updates via an evolving information and reporting plan
- + Ensure that learning and education research and innovation activities are aligned with service requirements, system growth and population demand



Priority action 3: Align research and innovation themes with current NES strategies and the emerging NES strategies from 2026

It is vital that the Research and Innovation Plan adds value to NES by establishing priority areas of focus that we believe will contribute positively to the achievement of strategic outcomes for NES. This will ensure the research and innovation agenda directly supports NES corporate strategies, emphasising the development of the health and social care workforce, fostering strategic partnerships and enhancing performance.

### Action 3.1 | Share and test current year themes

For 2025–26, the Research and Innovation Plan identifies 5 themes:

- 1. Emergent education, training and development
- 2. Workforce diversification and learner pathways
- 3. Learning environment
- 4. Emergent technology, educational technology and artificial intelligence
- 5. Research and innovation capacity

During the year these will be shared across NES though a range of resources, including case studies and online all staff webinars. This will allow teams and colleagues to hear from peers on their practice, offer feedback and additional themes for consideration.

As the year progresses, the NES Research and Innovation Reference Group will explore how current research and innovation activity aligns with these themes, providing additional visibility and identifying where further investment may be beneficial.

As NES moves towards the development of future strategies, insights from and evaluation of evolving research and innovation will in turn help shape future requirements, creating a flow of evidence and intent. This will include the development of horizon scanning approaches, incorporating both innovation in clinical and care practices and research into the future of workplace learning and skills development.



# Priority action 3: Align research and innovation themes with current NES strategies and the emerging NES strategies from 2026

#### Action 3.2 | Assess alignment of current activities

The Research and Innovation Reference Group will assess how current research and innovation activity aligns with these themes, providing additional visibility and identifying where further investment may be beneficial. This will be a key element of the development of the research and innovation governance structures.

#### Actions will include:

- + Identify appropriate alignment frameworks for both research and innovation
- + Review current activities within the agreed framework and assess thematic connections
- + Complete gap analysis to identify areas for potential investment and focus

### Action 3.3 | Contribute to emerging strategic development

As NES moves towards the development of future strategies, insights from and evaluation of evolving research and innovation will in turn help shape future requirements, creating a flow of evidence and intent. This will include the development of horizon scanning approaches, incorporating both innovation in clinical and care practices and research into the future of workplace learning and skills development.

#### Actions will include:

- + Connecting with the Strategic Planning team to ensure appropriate engagement with existing processes
- + Explore additional steps to maximise alignment during strategic and operational planning cycles
- + Establish an effective approach to sharing research insights and horizon scanning scenarios to support decision-making at team and Directorate level



# Priority action 4: Harness external research and innovation strategic partnerships

To enable the conditions described above, two actions have been identified:

- + Establish partnerships
- + Target partnership activity

#### Action 4.1 | Establish partnerships

- + Collaborative potential evolves at a different pace in each set of circumstances, with stakeholders establishing an understanding of each other's key drivers and operating contexts. This informs the target area of focus. Establishing areas of strategic alignment and intent underpins how a partnership is confirmed. Whilst each partnership presents unique potential, NES will standardise how such engagement is agreed, offering transparency and clarity of purpose
- + Such agreement will enable structured activity that aligns with corporate objectives to partners' mutual benefit.

  This alignment will be a feature of quarterly and annual reporting, with attention to impact criteria. This is already underway, with activity from varied contributors in NES. Activity in this area will develop and consolidate requirements specific to this partnership working and be reflected in a milestones activity diagram
- + Early collaborative engagement will help identify each organisation's strengths and specific areas for collaborative working, with clear expectations regarding outputs. Standardised systems of recording and reporting will develop to both capture these and enhance profile, visibility and potential for impact. This will add to efficiency



## Priority action 4: Harness external research and innovation strategic partnerships

### Action 4.2 | Target partnership activity

- + We expect that each partnership and the agreed intended outcomes will have an iterative life cycle, with evaluation forming a crucial role in how a partnership evolves to maintain currency and ongoing effectiveness
- + We recognise that collaborative working is not exclusive to NES. NES may engage in partnership activity which has dependencies and connections with other partnered organisations across the health and social care ecosystem, that is our collaboration may not always be a 1:1 partnership. This is expected and will be noted within ongoing reporting
- + We also expect that change agency will be a feature of many partnerships, influencing forecasting and future strategic planning
- + Partnership working and joint engagement may require planning information and activity to socialise the broader system to such working practice. We expect that this will add cohesion and efficiency in NES responsiveness to end audiences; be they learners, workforce or Scotland's population



### Priority action 5: Monitor and evaluate impact of research and innovation

Regularly monitor and evaluate the impact of research and innovation activities on organisational performance, using these insights to refine and enhance the research and innovation agenda as a component of corporate activity in structured cycles.

The impact of research and innovation describes the 'real life' positive or negative consequences or impacts that can be attributed, directly or indirectly, to an intervention or innovation. Impacts may be planned as a result of 'spillover effects', unplanned leading to unanticipated benefits or harms. Harnessing, understanding and developing from the outputs of such activity is key to NES developing as a learning organisation. We expect this area to grow.

Evaluation and monitoring of impact enables NES to measure the effectiveness of its research and innovation activities and how these contribute to organisational performance, the wider workforce and the wellbeing of Scotland's population.

#### Benefits include:

- + Personal and professional satisfaction for the NES workforce; knowing their contribution is making a positive difference
- + Organisational ability to identify the strengths and weaknesses of research and innovation activity, informing decision-making regarding capacity and efficient resource allocation
- + Insights that promote learning and continuous improvement across NES programmes and activities, as well as the broader system
- + Increased likelihood of securing external funding to support research and innovation activities
- + Data that demonstrate NES efficiency and effectiveness in resource application
- + Progression of the corporate objective to enhance the NES reputation as a world class organisation for education, training and learning



### Priority action 5: Monitor and evaluate impact of research and innovation

### Action 5.1 | Consolidate NES impact evaluation and monitoring frameworks

The NES Planning for Impact Framework is informed by the Kirkpatrick Model which measures impact at 4 levels:

- + Engagement
- + Education
- + Performance
- + Service

The Planning for Impact Framework, which enhances focus on impact evaluation and a perpetuating cycle of growth, is available to all staff.

- + We expect to see greater application of this framework with reportable outcomes
- + Development of an enhanced approach to evaluate and monitor NES research and innovation activities
- + Findings from this activity will flow into governance structures, progressing cumulative refinement of the NES system for evaluating research and innovation activity. We expect to see alignment between outputs from priority action 5 and priority action 1

### Action 5.2 | Establish methods for evaluation and monitoring impact

Pathways to impact are strategies that are planned and implemented at the inception of a research and innovation activity which inform the generation and measurement of impacts in line with the NES strategy. The extent of the evaluation and monitoring undertaken should be proportionate to programmes and projects. Impact evaluation and monitoring will be evidenced by reported documentation.

Consultation with staff and subject experts will ensure methods within the research and innovation evaluation and monitoring framework are relevant and applicable across NES. Staff surveys will chart progress.



### Priority action 5: Monitor and evaluate impact of research and innovation

### Action 5.3 Develop impact evaluation and monitoring outcome measures

Impact outcomes to be measured and monitored may differ according to the research or innovation programme evaluated.

- + We will explore development of a core set of outcomes relevant to all activities
- + A focus of this will be consideration of how these core outcomes link to NES Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

NES research and innovation activities may be carried out in partnership with other health boards or organisations.

- + When considering impact outcomes, we will identify and consider the needs of collaborative partners
- + Guidance on how best to measure costs and benefits will be explored

Methods to measure impact outcomes can be qualitative or quantitative, with varied indicators.

+ We anticipate that these broader measures of impact will be included in the impact evaluation and monitoring framework being developed

### Action 5.4 Develop structures to support dissemination of impact

Dissemination is the process of sharing evidence of impact across NES and with our external stakeholders. Without effective dissemination, many of the benefits described in part 5.1 will not be realised and the impact of our research and innovation activities will not be maximised.

- + We will include plans for dissemination during the programme / project planning stage and the effectiveness of a range of potential dissemination vehicles will be explored
- + Dissemination aims to reach and engage as wide an audience as possible
- + Increased dissemination resulting in heightened profile of research and innovation activity will be one criteria marker for success

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages. Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or email **altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk** to discuss how we can best meet your requirements.

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