

# **NSS Equality Outcome Plan 2025-29**



**April 2025**

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# Foreword

## Our Approach

NHS National Services Scotland aims to be a leading organisation for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion within our workplace and in the wider NHSScotland.

The NSS vision for Equality & Diversity goes beyond establishing processes to achieve change.

As part of our interaction with our donors, public, service users, customers and suppliers we will monitor our progress towards meeting objectives to:

- Encourage diversity and eliminate unfair treatment and discrimination through a full range of human resource and contracting policies and procedures.
- This applies not just to areas of internal recruitment, training and development and promotion, but also monitoring the adherence to the equality & diversity legislation and principles by our Directorates and Services including their suppliers and contractors.
- Recognise that staff have rights as employees to work in a supportive, safe and harassment free environment.
- Support staff to understand that they have individual and collective responsibility to value and respect each other's contributions.
- Promote an environment where standards of conduct are of the highest level and to ensure that no one is harassed, bullied or victimised.
- Take decisive action when discrimination occurs.
- Review and monitor the services we deliver and assess the impact on equality and diversity.

We are passionate about making sure that all our services are accessible to everyone by removing real or perceived barriers. It also means that we will deliver services that will meet the needs of donors, patients and service users.

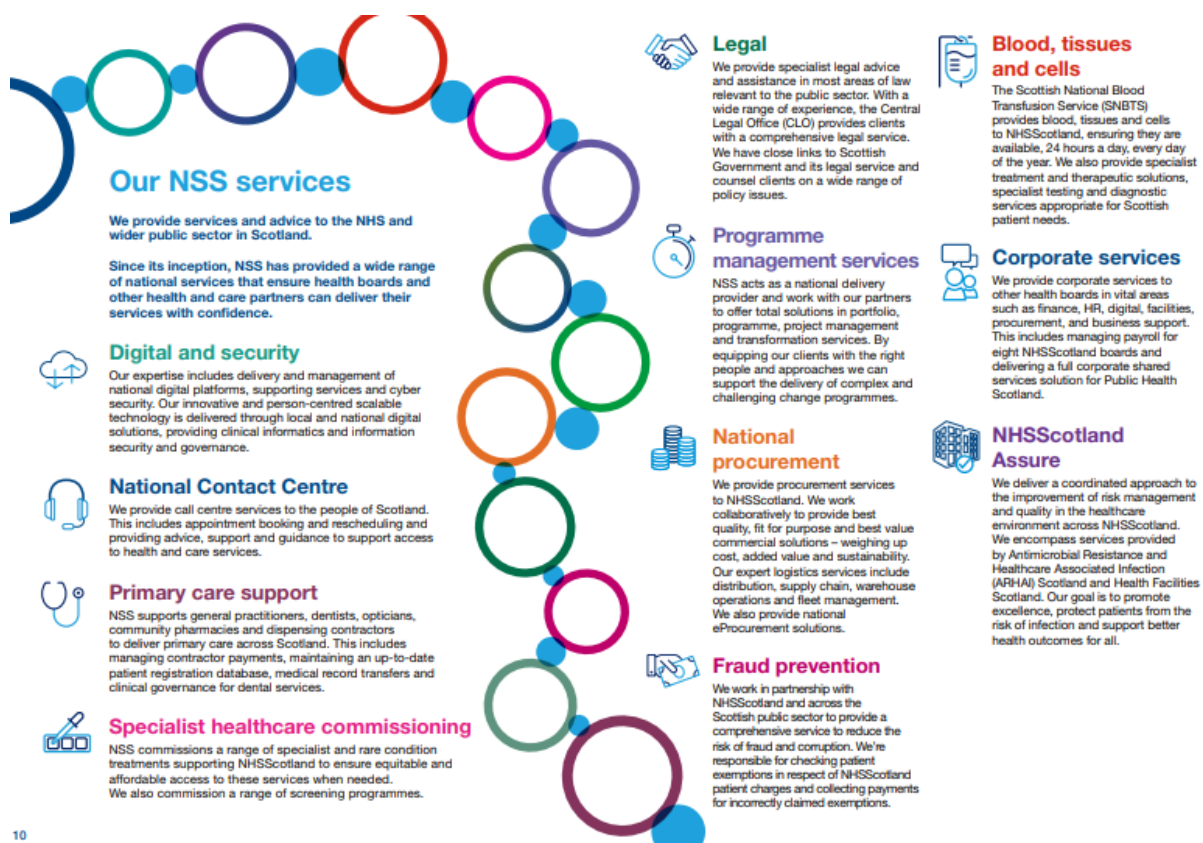
Excellent equality and diversity practice means that everybody is treated with dignity and respect and leads to improved outcomes for all.

**Tom McHugh**  
**Chair NSS Equality and Diversity Steering Group**

# 1. Introduction

NSS is a public body, accountable to Scottish Ministers. NSS has a mandate to provide national strategic support services and expert advice to Scotland's health and care sector while maximising health impacts and cost savings. NSS was established as the Common Services Agency in 1974 under The National Health Service (Functions of the Common Services Agency) (Scotland) Order 1974. The Public Bodies (Joint Working) Scotland Act 2014 further extended our remit to enable the provision of services to other public bodies. We work closely with our partner organisations, including NHS boards and local authorities, to ensure that our services align with the evolving needs of the health and social care system in Scotland.

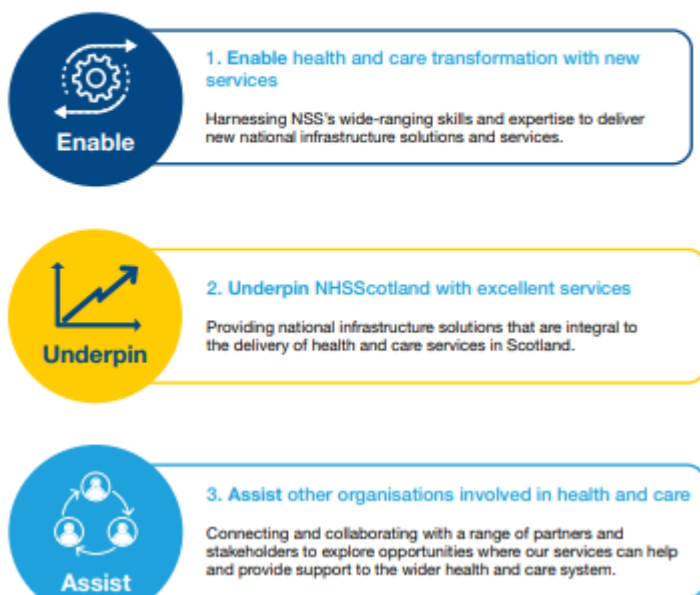
## Our NSS Services



## Our NSS strategy

NSS is integral to Scotland's health and care services.

We set ourselves three priorities to ensure this is maintained.



### Enable

The Enable priority focused on harnessing the wide ranging expertise and skills across NSS to deliver national solutions and services that supported healthcare professionals to deliver high-quality care to the people of Scotland.

### Underpin

Our Underpin priority focused on improving our core services which are essential to the functioning of the wider health and social care system. Continually improving these services ensured a strong and stable foundation for the healthcare system to deliver the best possible care and outcomes for the people of Scotland.

### Assist

Our Assist pillar linked together organisations involved in health and care and beyond, and accounts for the work we did to help manage national incidents or resilience issues in NHSScotland. Regularly connecting with partners and stakeholders helped ensure that our services supported the wider health and care system and meant that we could respond quickly and appropriately.

## 2. Public Sector Equality Duty

### The General Duty and Specific Duties

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is set out in the Equality Act 2010.<sup>1</sup>

We are a listed body in the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and are also covered by specific duties, which are designed to help us as a listed authority to meet the general equality duty.

The general equality duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Advancing equality of opportunity includes in particular having due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it,
- Encourage people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation is disproportionately low.

The Public Sector Equality Duty covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. It also covers marriage and civil partnership, with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment.

Age discrimination in services and public functions is prohibited against people aged 18 and over. This means that people under 18 are covered by the duty with regard to advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

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<sup>1</sup> [Public Sector Equality Duty | EHRC](#)

### **The Scottish specific duties:**

- Report on mainstreaming the equality duty.
- Publish equality outcomes and report progress.
- Assess and review the equality impact of policies and practices.
- Gather, use and publish employee information.
- Use information on the characteristics of members or board members gathered by the Scottish Ministers.
- Publish gender pay gap information.
- Publish equal pay statements.
- Consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement.
- Publish in a manner that is accessible.

## **3. Equality Outcomes**

### **What is an Equality Outcome**

An equality outcome is a measurable result that aims to achieve and to further one or more of the needs of the general duty. We must publish a set of equality outcomes at least every four years. We must also publish a report on the progress made to achieve our equality outcomes every two years. We must take reasonable steps to involve people with relevant protected characteristics and the organisations who represent their interests when preparing your equality outcomes. We must also consider relevant equality evidence. If our set of equality outcomes does not further the needs of the general duty for every relevant protected group, we must publish the reasons for this.

### **What is Equality of Outcome**

Equality of outcome is a concept that seeks to address social inequalities by advocating for a fair distribution of resources and opportunities.

Key Principles<sup>2</sup>

The concept of equality of outcome is based on several key principles:

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<sup>2</sup> [Understanding the Concept of Equality of Outcome in Sociology](#)

- 1. Distribution of Resources:** Equality of outcome emphasizes the fair distribution of resources, such as income, education, healthcare, and housing, among all members of society. The aim is to ensure that everyone has access to the basic necessities required for a decent standard of living.
- 2. Reduction of Inequalities:** The concept seeks to reduce social and economic inequalities by narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor. This involves implementing policies and programs that address systemic disadvantages and provide support to marginalized groups.
- 3. Equitable Opportunities:** Equality of outcome recognizes that individuals have different starting points and circumstances. It aims to provide equal opportunities for individuals to reach their full potential, regardless of their background or social status.
- 4. Quality of Life:** The concept emphasizes the importance of improving the overall quality of life for all members of society. This includes ensuring access to healthcare, education, employment, and a clean environment.

## Developing our Equality Outcomes

In preparation we have engaged with a range of stakeholders including our equality and diversity steering group, employees, directorates, employee networks and external organisations to develop our equality outcomes. We analysed the national and local data and evidence available to us, including our equality impact assessments, our strategy and relevant workforce plans.


This has helped us understand the equality issues in NSS.

This has also helped us understand what our priorities are for action over the next 4 years ensuring that our equality outcomes are specific, measurable, achievable and have clear timelines (SMART). We have used both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure that we focus on the quality of experience of our employees and our service users.

### Proportionality

We are a national public body in Scotland and our equality outcomes have been developed in context against our objectives for financial and environmental and climate sustainability.





We have set our equality outcomes reflecting our role in NHSScotland and our impact on those who use our services and our employees who deliver our services.

This is reflected in the number of equality outcomes that we have set ourselves for 2025-29.

## Scope

The equality outcome plan covers the next 4 financial years this is line with the requirements set out in the specific duties.

The equality outcome plan provides our staff, directorates and services with an overarching framework within which will keep equality as a priority.

## Quality Improvement

A logic- modelling approach has again been adapted to develop the NSS equality outcomes. In essence the model is a series of steps. The logic model approach supports the development of:

- Short-term outcomes that we **expect** to see.
- Intermediate outcomes that we **want** to see which will often be dependent on several factors including for example effective partnerships.
- Long-term outcomes that we **hope** to see which are both ambitious and aspirational, their realisation depending on a number of factors some of which NSS may have direct influence over however others may be beyond our control.

## Delivering Our Anti-Racism Plan

The Scottish Government issued a DL 23 (2024) and wrote to Chief Executives, Board Chairs and HR Directors. This DL set out an additional requirement to embed anti-racism within Executive objectives for 2024-25. The letter stated that each set of individual Executive objectives should include a commitment that the Board, if not already in place, deliver against their own anti-racism plan, covering both workforce and racialised health inequalities. Our equality outcome plan reflects this additional requirement by including objectives to achieve this commitment to anti-racism.

# 4 Meeting our Public Sector Equality Duties

To ensure we meet our general duties and specific duties we will ensure that our staff, donors, customers and service users will be protected from unfair

discrimination due to their protected characteristics.<sup>3</sup> We have listened to feedback provided by our staff and our customers and service users.

During our engagement work we have met with Young Scot, Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), BEMIS<sup>4</sup> and all our employee equality networks who represent each protected characteristic. We will continue to progress our work to maintain the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS) blood donation campaign.<sup>5</sup> This campaign work encourages Muslims and people of all communities in Scotland to give blood during the holy month of Muharram - the Islamic New Year. We will continue to work collaboratively with our partners to address health inequalities in screening to ensure equity of access and equal benefit for individuals.

For further information on our work please visit our website [Welcome to National Services Scotland](#).

## 5. Equality Outcomes 2025-29

### 5.1 Equality Outcome 1

**As an employer we will promote wellbeing, equality and diversity and implement the framework for improving wellbeing and workplace culture.<sup>6</sup>**

The Improving Wellbeing and Working Culture Framework and Action Plan is about supporting workplace cultures through programmes of work at a national level that focus on the shared needs across all three sectors of collaborative and compassionate leadership, wellbeing and equality. It is about a sense of belonging and allowing staff to reach their full potential, free from discrimination. It is about an ethos of equity and inclusion, for under-represented groups of staff, who do not always have a voice. And ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background, understands how they can contribute to a more inclusive workplace culture.

We will implement current programmes for wellbeing, leadership and equality in line with guidance advised via Scottish Government which are currently being taken forward through the Leading to Change team and the National Wellbeing Hub.

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<sup>3</sup> [Protected characteristics | EHRC](#)

<sup>4</sup> [bemis.org.uk](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Scotblood | Imam Hussain Blood Donation Campaign 2024](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Health and social care: improving wellbeing and working cultures - gov.scot](#)

### 5.1.1 Equality Outcome 2

**As an employer we will improve the equality data completion rates by our employees.**

The public sector equality duty requires us to gather and analyse employee information. In 2021-22 the average completion rate for staff was 92% compared to a completion rate of 91% on the 31 December 2024.

We will implement a communication plan which will demonstrate the benefits of providing equality data in a workplace setting.

### 5.1.2 Equality Outcome 3

**As an employer we will deliver all the commitments set out in our anti-racism plan.**

Our anti-racism plan is designed to improve on our work in leadership, accountability and governance for equality, diversity, and ways to improve an inclusive culture.

The NSS Ethnic, Cultural Diversity and Friends network will be supported to celebrate and invest in spaces for ethnic minority colleagues and allies to meet, share their views and be heard.

Cultural safety and cultural diversity will be recognised and celebrated (including activity throughout World Day for Cultural Diversity and Race Equality Week), as will workplace practices which promote inclusion and belonging, such as the Great Place to Work Plan and the Wellbeing Hub.

External and internal representation of race and ethnicity on websites, social media and NSS materials will be reviewed and updated to ensure they are reflective of the diversity of the health and social care workforce and our employees, volunteers and the wider population.

Allyship by staying informed about issues related to our workforce and communities we want to support and speaking up against harmful words or terms. Being honest about our knowledge of the community and participating in events honouring different groups. Ensuring we use inclusive language.

### 5.1.3 Equality Outcome 4

**As a service provider we will ensure that we take reasonable steps to provide information we produce is accessible and available in alternative formats.**

We acknowledge that the Equality Act 2010 states that we must take reasonable steps to provide our information in alternative formats and ensure that the information is accessible.

Our work with equality groups and networks has helped us understand that although we have examples of good and promising practice there are still areas where people, both staff and service users experience barriers to accessing information and services.

We ensure that all employees are aware of the guidance provided by our communication service which provides detailed information and support on making written information as accessible as possible.

We have adopted and comply with the Web Content Accessibility guidelines to ensure that our web pages are perceivable, operable, understandable and robust. We will continue to involve and engage with our staff and service users to receive regular feedback and comments to help improve the accessibility of our site.

We will continue to work in line with the Planning with People guidance<sup>7</sup> which promotes consistency, culture change, and true collaboration, while encouraging creativity and innovation, based on best practice. It places people and communities at the centre of care service design and change, to deliver the best results. We will use the findings from our equality impact assessments to improve our approach.

## 5. Achieving our Equality Outcomes

### 6.1 As an employer we will promote wellbeing, equality and diversity and implement the framework for improving wellbeing and workplace culture

#### Situation

Since the Covid-19 pandemic it is clear that our workforce is capable of delivering excellent care despite unparalleled challenges. As individuals responsible for providing and enabling care to others – often under physically and emotionally

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<sup>7</sup> [Part 1 – Planning with People - Health and social care - Planning with People: community engagement and participation guidance - gov.scot](#)



With better data in place and more opportunities for analysis, staff with protected characteristics will have an improved workplace experience.

## General Duty

Advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and foster good relations.

### 6.3 As an employer we will deliver all the commitments set out in our anti-racism plan

#### Situation

Racism is a significant public health challenge and the NHS has a key role to play in tackling racism, reducing racialised health inequalities and creating a more equitable health and care system for all. Health Boards have been asked to develop and deliver against their own anti-racism plans, covering both workforce and equity-focused service delivery.<sup>9</sup>

#### Activities

There are a number of actions included in our anti-racism plan including:

- Develop anti-racism objectives for the executive management team.
- Further develop and create opportunities for learning and development for all staff on anti-racism, cultural humility, equality and diversity.
- Build on the range of resources available on the Management Hub, Wellbeing Hub and ensure alternative mechanisms are in place for all staff to participate in learning opportunities.
- Implement further work to raise awareness of the Ethnic, Cultural Diversity and Friends network.
- Continue to communicate and celebrate diversity highlighting a number of events across the year.
- Continue to provide a culture where staff feel free to speak up by using services like the confidential contact service, whistleblowing and the employee equality networks.
- Address barriers to recruitment by implementing national guidance and toolkits.
- Build on our work achieved so far in our Leadership Programme and Allyship Programme.

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<sup>9</sup> [Anti-racism plans - guidance](#)

## Equality Outcomes

Our staff, customers and service users will have an improved experience in relation to their employee journey; access to our services and working in and with a culturally competent and diverse organisation.

## General Duty

Advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and foster good relations.

### **6.4 As a service provider we will ensure that we take reasonable steps to provide information we produce is accessible and available in alternative formats.**

#### Situation

The Public Sector Equality Duty, specific duties<sup>10</sup> requires us to publish in an accessible manner. Our engagement work to inform our equality outcomes has told us that some groups still face barriers when accessing information.

#### Activities

- We will implement our refreshed Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) process across all directorates which provides guidance and support to staff completing EQIAs to ensure a Once for NSS approach.
- We will deliver webinars and workshops on the refreshed EQIA process which will include information and examples of accessible information.
- Our Communications team will continue to update and refresh our branding and corporate template toolkits which includes guidance on making written information and content accessible.
- Our Communications team will launch a new improved Corporate NSS website in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility standards.
- All staff responsible for writing information and content will carry out accessibility checks.
- All staff responsible for writing information and content will engage with staff, our networks and service users to carry out user testing of materials before they are published.

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<sup>10</sup> [Public Sector Equality Duty: specific duties in Scotland | EHRC](#)

- We will ensure that anyone that needs an alternative format knows how to request this and that their request will be met in a timely manner. Where it is not possible to provide this (if it is not reasonable or proportionate) we will work with the individual to agree a solution.
- Our client facing services will continue to provide an interpretation service.
- Our public facing services will continue to provide an interpretation service and written materials in community languages and British Sign Language (BSL).

## Equality Outcomes

Our staff and service users will have an improved experience working in and using our services.

## General Duty

Advance equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.


# 7. Measuring and Monitoring our Progress

We will review our progress on an annual basis to help us understand whether more effort and resources are needed to achieve our equality outcomes. This review will also help us make decisions if our equality outcomes need revised or whether we need to change our actions to achieve them.

We will update our Equality and Diversity Steering Group and Executive Management Team (EMT) on a regular basis and highlight any potential risks.

We will report on and publish our progress every 2 years via our board governance process.





To request this document in an alternative format please contact

[NSS.EqualityDiversity@nhs.scot](mailto:NSS.EqualityDiversity@nhs.scot)

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要以其他格式索取此文件，請聯繫 NSS。 [EqualityDiversity@nhs.scot](mailto:EqualityDiversity@nhs.scot)

Aby poprosić o ten dokument w alternatywnym formacie, skontaktuj się z NSS.  
[EqualityDiversity@nhs.scot](mailto:EqualityDiversity@nhs.scot)