

# EQUALITY STRATEGY

2022-2024

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## Foreword

I am delighted to introduce our new Equality Strategy. This follows on from our previous strategy of 2017 and builds on the many improvements we have made over that time. This new strategy demonstrates our continued commitment to embedding an ethos and practice of equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do and it outlines the equality outcomes we aim to deliver over the coming years.

In developing this Strategy we have been mindful of the complexity of the issues we are attempting to address and the system within which we are operating. The issues are significant and long-standing and we recognise that it won't be possible to affect our desired level of systemic change in the timeframe of this Strategy.

At the same time, the consultation on reform of the Scottish education system, led by Professor Ken Muir, resulted in the announcement by the Cabinet Secretary for Skills and Education that Education Scotland will be replaced with a new National Agency for Scottish education and a new independent Inspectorate. This Strategy is therefore naturally focussed on our short and medium term outcomes. However, the longer term outcomes identified during the development of this Strategy will continue to fully inform all that we do as we move through the upcoming period of change.

Our unwavering focus continues to be on providing support for Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators, and our new Equality Strategy is built on both the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework and Education Scotland's Vision, Values and Strategic Priorities as set out in our new [Corporate Plan](#), committing us to actions through which we will embrace diversity, attract and retain the best staff and provide robust support to our stakeholders. Not only do we want Education Scotland to be a great place to work, we continue to aspire to be an organisation that embraces our differences, acknowledges our strengths and is representative of all sections of society; promoting equality and respect so that everyone is able to achieve their potential.

In doing so, we aim to support an increase in awareness, understanding, knowledge and skills not just across Education Scotland but also the wider education community, in order that they can better support Scotland's learners. Working in partnership with our stakeholders has always been an important part of the ethos of Education Scotland and we will continue to engage with, work with, and support the system in delivering our Strategic Priorities, including that of "Inclusion, Wellbeing, Equity and Equality".

We are all individuals and our needs can be complex and varied, but I am confident that our new Equality Strategy demonstrates our aspiration to achieve real and lasting progress for diverse groups and individuals over the next few years, ensuring that we continue to build a diverse and inclusive organisation, with equality at the centre of everything we do.



## About Education Scotland

Education Scotland was established in July 2011 as an Executive Agency of Scottish Government under the terms of the Scotland Act 1998. As the current national improvement agency for education in Scotland, our Vision and Mission are:

### **Vision**

Achieving excellence and equity for Scotland's learners with Scotland's educators.

### **Mission**

To work collaboratively with all stakeholders involved in Scottish education to secure sustained improvement in achievement and attainment for all learners, closing the poverty-related attainment gap and securing positive and sustained destinations for all learners regardless of their age and where the learning takes place.

To achieve these aims, we currently work in the following ways across education sectors, and at national, regional, local and establishment levels:

- providing professional learning and leadership programmes;
- providing improvement support, including face to face and digital resources;
- carrying out independent external scrutiny activity, including inspection and review;
- managing the development of national digital resources, including Glow, our online learning platform, which provides a safe environment for educators, learners and parents to communicate, and collaborate;
- providing independent policy advice to Ministers and civil servants, informed by our evidence.

Our role means that, in addition to supporting the system and gathering evidence on the performance of the system, we also provide professional analysis and interpret a wide range of data relating to Scottish education. In essence, we add value to Scottish education by making sense of the system in its totality and as the Executive Agency supporting quality and improvement in Scottish education, our role ultimately secures the delivery of better learning experiences and outcomes for Scottish learners of all ages.

## The Changing National Context

The Cabinet Secretary for Education announced on 22 June 2021 the intention to replace the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) while also taking forward reform to Education Scotland, including removing the function of inspection from the agency. Professor Ken Muir, University of the West of Scotland, was appointed in August 2021 to act as an independent advisor on the Reform of SQA and Education Scotland.

Professor Muir carried out an extensive programme of engagement with stakeholders, including meetings, webinars and a public consultation from 30 September 2021 to 26 November 2021. He also appointed an expert panel and advisory group to assist with his work.

Professor Muir's subsequent report, 'Putting Children at the Centre: A Vision for Scottish Education' was published on 9 March 2022. The Scottish Government published a response to Professor Muir's report on the same day, confirming the creation of a new National Agency for Scottish education which will replace Education Scotland with an expected date of 2024. Education Scotland's current Inspection function will also move, to form a new, separate, Inspectorate body with its independence enshrined in legislation.

The OECD Curriculum Review, also recently published, will also help shape the future of education in Scotland, as we strive to support continual improvement across the whole education system.

Education Scotland, and the wider education sector, is therefore facing a period of significant change and reform. There is clearly much to be done which will require the knowledge, skills and experience of staff within Education Scotland and our Leadership Team is already engaging with government officials about the positive opportunities that now lie ahead. Throughout what is undoubtedly going to be a significant period of change, our priority will continue to be supporting the education system to provide the best possible experiences, opportunities and outcomes for Scotland's learners. This does, of course, mean that this Strategy remains a working, iterative document while these structural changes take place.

## Equality Duties

The Equality Act 2010 outlines the general and specific duties Education Scotland must adhere to as an executive agency of the Scottish Government. It provides the legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all groups including:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Race
- Sex

As part of the **general duties**, when exercising all of our functions, in delivering services and in relation to employees, we must give due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other prohibited conduct;
- 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.

In terms of the **specific duties**, Education Scotland must also:

- Publish a report on the progress made on mainstreaming equality every two years;
- Publish equality outcomes report on their progress every four years based on evidence and involvement of equality groups and communities;
- Equality impact assess all new and existing Education Scotland policies (including decisions, for example financial) s;
- Gather and publish employment data on the structure of the organisation by protected characteristic;
- Publish statements on equal pay between equality groups and on occupational segregation from equality groups in particular grades and particular occupations;
- Consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement; and
- Publish information in a manner that is accessible.

### Intersectionality

The interconnected nature of the different protected characteristics above can create unique and complex experiences of discrimination, disadvantage or inequality for an individual. Improving awareness of this

and ensuring that there are no assumptions about the homogeneity of groups within our work will help us develop better inclusive practice and better achieve our equality outcomes.

In addition, over the past two years COVID-19 has had a profound impact on Scotland's citizens. It has further exposed existing inequalities and further increased the likelihood of leaving behind the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in society. This Equality Strategy therefore not only aims to capture our work to improve outcomes for those who share the protected characteristics above, but those whose life chances are impacted by wider inequalities i.e. socio-economic barriers and young people who are care experienced.

## Leadership Behaviours and Values in Action

Our people are the driving force in achieving both our strategic goals and our Equality Outcomes. Bringing our equality strategy to life in the actions, values and behaviours that underpin all the work we do is central to our goal of making ES a great place to work for everyone. All of us at Education Scotland have a responsibility to make sure we are committed to challenging discrimination and unfairness and to promoting equality and diversity in everything we do.

Our Values in Action framework is a crucial element of doing so. This comprises clear simple statements, directly relevant to ES and linked to our values of Respect, Integrity, Creativity and Excellence:

- Within **Respect** – these statements cover kindness, diversity, getting involved, exploring different viewpoints, engaging in healthy professional debate, working with others, and building solutions based on needs.
- Within **Integrity** – these statements cover delivering on commitments, taking ownership, leading by example, considering stakeholders, communicating authentically, offering help and speaking up
- Within **Creativity** – these statements cover looking ahead, embracing change, identifying risks, adapting, seeking creative solutions and being part of the solution
- Within **Excellence** – these statements cover demonstrating passion, working to high standards, using good judgement, being self-aware, focusing on development and wellbeing and learning from every situation.

We will use this framework in three main ways:

- To self-reflect, hone our skills and develop
- To positively reinforce these behaviours through recognition
- To identify when we need to challenge, or give feedback that things are not happening

## Our approach

We developed our approach before we knew Education Scotland would be replaced in 2024. In doing so, Education Scotland has adopted a new logic model approach in setting out not just our equality outcomes for the next three years, but also the medium and longer term outcomes we'd like to see in the system. The logic model presents a clear 'theory of change' and allows us to plan effectively for the outcomes or

changes we wish to make internally and externally, and the activities we will undertake to achieve them. It highlights the areas we will need to monitor and evaluate, and helps us to identify how we will gather the necessary evidence of impact.

The logic model is therefore an effective tool which clearly demonstrates the links between our activities and the outcomes we hope to achieve. However, we are mindful of the complexity of the issues we are attempting to address and the system within which we are operating. The issues are significant and long-standing, with a multitude of stakeholders involved.

Given this complexity, and the fact that Education Scotland will be replaced with an independent inspectorate and a new National Agency for Scottish education, we are realistic that it will not be possible for us to achieve our longer-term outcomes within the timeframe of the strategy, although they will be the main driver for all the work that we will undertake and may inform the work of our successor organisations. This Strategy is therefore naturally focussed on our short and medium term outcomes. However, we know that if we are to make effective progress towards meeting our longer term outcomes, then we must keep the logic model, and underpinning actions, under review with the model and actions further developed or adapted as needed, after this Strategy has been published.

In terms of reporting against our outcomes during the period of this Strategy, we will therefore focus primarily on our short-term outcomes – these are the outcomes we have the most direct control over and where we will be able to confidently link the achievement of these outcomes with our specific activities. Additionally, we will also be able to demonstrate the progress we are making in terms of our medium and longer-term outcomes, and how we are contributing towards affecting change within the education system. Our short term outcomes are set out below:

#### Internally focussed outcomes

- **More candidates from diverse backgrounds apply for roles**
- **All ES staff increase their awareness, understanding, knowledge, confidence and skills around equality and diversity and the benefits of being a more diverse organisation.**
- **Education Scotland has improved insights and targeted actions to improve the equality and diversity of our organisation.**

#### Externally focussed outcomes

- **Leaders across all professional levels are increasingly cognisant of the barriers to promoted posts for certain equalities groups and proactively work to break down these barriers**
- **Education practitioners increase their knowledge, understanding, awareness, confidence and skills in relation to equality and diversity issues, and practice**
- **Education practitioners increasingly indicate they are likely to implement learning from ES in practice/make changes to processes**
- **Increased availability of accessible equality and diversity information for parents/families**

An overview of our full model, including our medium and longer term outcomes, is at **Annex A** and shows both our internal and external theory of change.

## Developing our outcomes

The Scottish Government's policy landscape is evolving considerably in relation to human rights and inequalities, changing expectations for the way public bodies deliver services and the relationships with stakeholders to improve outcomes through lived experience. Education Scotland continues to support the Scottish Government with improvements for learners with protected characteristics through, for example the Race Equality and Antiracist Education Programme and the implementation of the LGBT Inclusive Education where outcomes are being co-produced with stakeholders with lived experience.

We also continue to be key contributor to delivering the Scottish Government's Equality Outcomes 2021-25 as set out in the Mainstreaming Report 2021 and supporting documents. At the same time, Education Scotland makes decisions that affect the lives of everyone in our communities and it is therefore important that we consider the equality impact of all that we do. We have therefore developed our Equality Outcomes to be cognisant with those of the Scottish Government, designed to meet our commitments and obligations under the National Performance Framework, as well as Education Scotland's own strategic priorities which have been developed with our staff and stakeholders to reflect the current priorities for Scottish education

Our 11 outward facing equality outcomes and 47 associated actions will involve a wide range of external and internal partners and will be delivered by Education Scotland staff across **all** Directorates. As a result of this range of activity and engagement we are confident that our impact will be spread widely, thereby building capacity and an understanding of equalities across Scotland. For example, in the area of disability and inclusion we intend to further promote and embed the principles of inclusion and accessibility across policy, planning, learning, teaching and assessment. We will do this through career long professional learning. This will include input to Local Authority Accessibility strategies, Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 (the Act) and other relevant legislative and policy developments. It will involve Regional and National staff from Education Scotland in delivery and development of resources, and professional learning, working with local authority lead officers, schools, external stakeholder groups including children/young people and parents, third sector organisations, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, Young Ambassadors for Inclusion, and other relevant stakeholders. In the area of health and wellbeing we will work with practitioners to ensure that they have an increased knowledge, understanding, confidence and awareness of their role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all learners. We will also provide support for practitioners to ensure their own wellbeing. In doing this we will continue to work with NHS Education for Scotland, Scottish Government, local authority educational psychologists, local authority lead officers, and third sector partners such as Place to Be and Barnardo's. Such activities are replicated across all of the 11 outward facing outcomes and provide an insight into the reach of our equality strategy and actions.

We further developed our new equality outcomes using evidence from a range of other sources linked to our general and specific equality duties including:

- Annual staff surveys
- Internal audits
- Management Information
- Inspection findings
- Staff profiling
- Professional learning evaluation data

We then agreed a consistent approach to refining and measuring our planned outcomes through a collaborative, cross directorate process.

Our Equality Outcomes describe the key changes we want to make in order to bring our equality duties to life; provide meaningful impact; and ensure our organisational values of Respect, Integrity, Creativity and Excellence are embedded in everything we do. The Outcomes do not cover the full range of everything we will do to reduce inequality but describe our key priorities for the coming years.

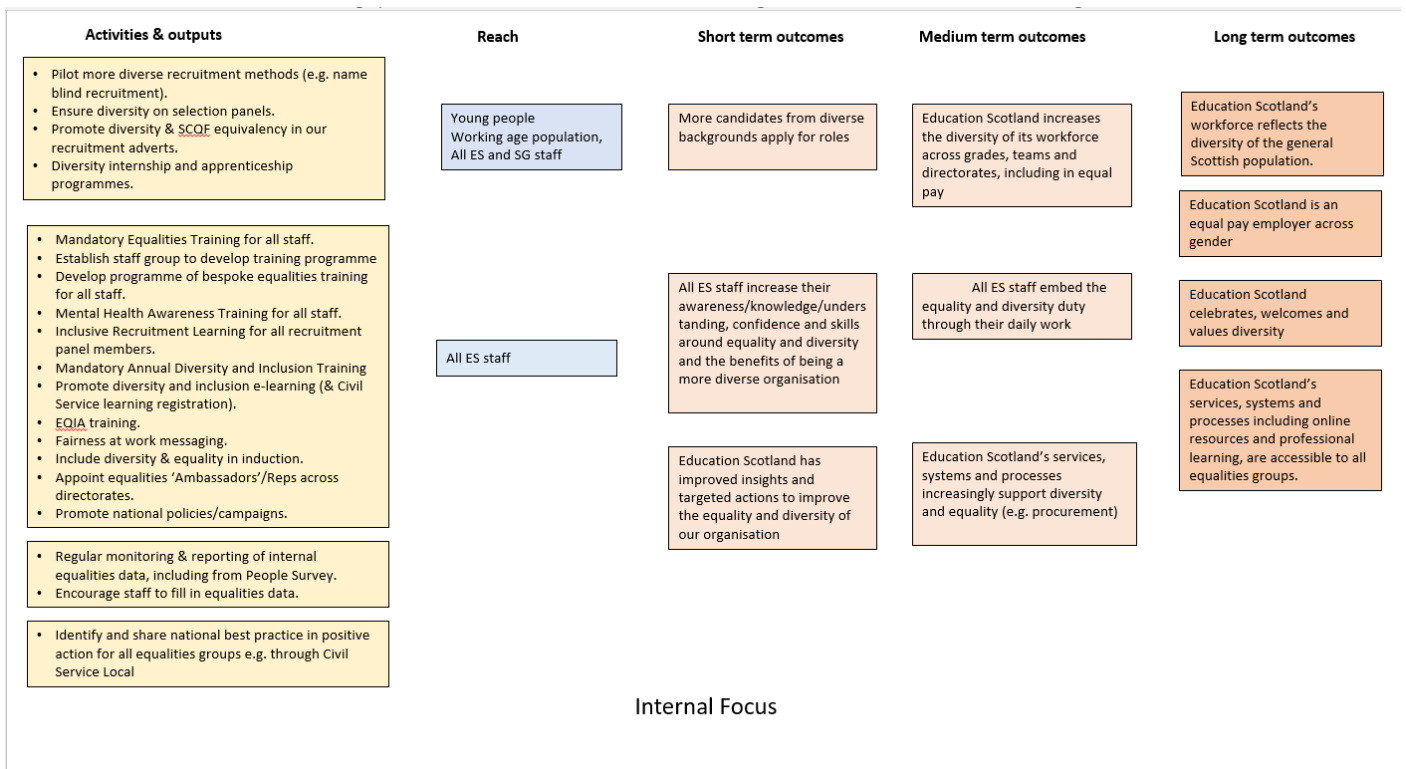
We also recognise that our work to improve outcomes for learners who share protected characteristics sits within the wider context of human rights and national work to embed UNCRC.

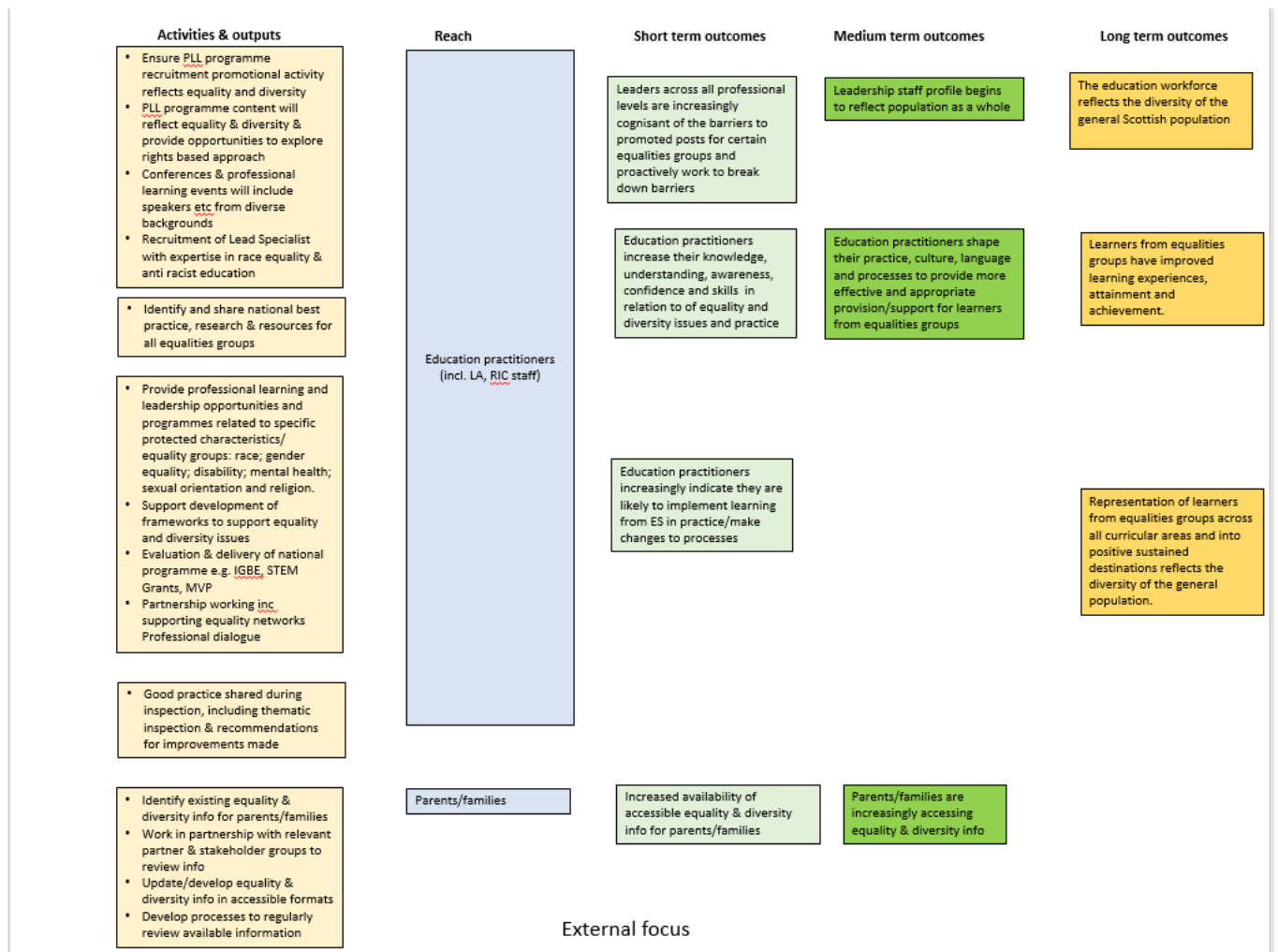
## Equalities Action Plan and Monitoring of Progress

In developing our Equality Outcomes using our Logic Model, we have developed an accompanying Action and Measurement plan that sets down all the short, medium and long term equality outcomes, and underpinning activities that we aim to deliver over the lifetime of this Strategy and beyond. Our Equalities Internal Steering Group will co-ordinate and monitor both the Logic Model and the Action and Measurement Plan on an ongoing basis. We will also formally report progress annually to our Leadership Team and Advisory Board.



# Annex A





## Glossary

- **Leadership Team** –the most senior officials within the Agency, led by the Chief Executive. A full list of members is available by clicking [here](#).
- **Corporate plan** – sets out our vision and strategic priorities over the next four years and outlines our commitment to ensuring inclusive education and opportunities for all.
- **Discrimination** – unjust or prejudicial treatment of people with protected characteristics.
- **Diversity** – recognising, respecting, and valuing people’s differences to enable them to contribute and realise their full potential by promoting an inclusive culture for all.
- **Equality** – the removal of discrimination, disadvantage, inequality, and/or barriers that can affect people on the grounds of the protected characteristics. A full list of definitions is available by clicking [here](#).
- **Equity** – the fairness and impartiality for people in general and sometimes especially relating to fairness for people facing socio-economic disadvantage.
- **Equality Act 2010** – is the main UK law which protects people who may be discriminated in the workplace or in wider society. A full version is available by clicking [here](#).
- **Equality impact assessments** – help us to demonstrate due regard and makes sure our policies, procedures and practices are inclusive.
- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** – the right to receive an education that does not discriminate against a child based on disability, ethnicity, religion, language, gender etc. A full overview of rights is available by clicking [here](#).
- **Inclusive education** - an ongoing process aimed at offering high quality education for all learners while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of learners and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination.
- **Mainstreaming equality** – the Scottish Government vision is available [here](#).
- **Pay gap** - the difference between the average hourly pay of two different groups of people, for example men and women, or groups from different ethnic backgrounds
- **Public Sector Equality Duty** – a full version is available by clicking [here](#).
- **Protected characteristics** – are specific aspects of a person’s identity, specifically the nine characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. They are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- **Stakeholders** – the wide range of individuals, groups, and organisations we work in partnership with.

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