

Equality & Inclusion Strategic Framework (2025-2029)

Annual Report

One Year On - 2026 Progress Update for our Workforce and our Communities

Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into everything we do - today and for the future.



Contents

Overview **3**

Our Legal Duty **4**

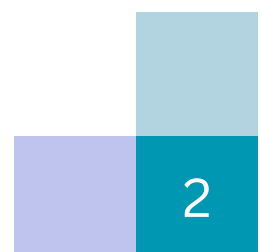
Equality Outcomes **5**

- Accessibility
- Awareness, Knowledge & Understanding
- Inclusive Environments
- Neurodiversity
- Anti-Racism Plan
- Health Inequalities

Get Involved **12**

Summary and Next Steps **13**

Alternative Formats **14**



Overview

Our NHS Forth Valley Equality and Inclusion Strategic Framework (2025 to 2029) sets out how we are working to create fairer, more inclusive services and workplaces for everyone. Strategic Framework can sound a bit like jargon, but essentially it is a shared plan that spells out where we're headed, what matters most, and how we'll make decisions to get there.

Being open and transparent about this work is important to us, which is why we publish an annual progress update.

This update shares what we have been doing over the past year, the progress we have made, and where there is more to do. It is part of our commitment to keeping people informed, learning from feedback, and holding ourselves to account as we continue this work.

By sharing our progress openly, we aim to stay connected with the people and communities we serve, and to ensure our approach remains relevant, responsive and inclusive.

At the heart of this report is a simple question: how are our equality commitments making a real difference to people's everyday experiences? Evidence consistently shows that inclusive and diverse organisations are better able to innovate, make informed decisions, improve workforce wellbeing and deliver better health outcomes. Ultimately, when inclusion is embedded across our services and workplaces, everyone benefits.

Our Legal Duty

As a public sector organisation, we have a legal duty under the Equality Act (2010) to treat people fairly and to consider equality in everything we do. This is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty.

In simple terms, this means we must work to prevent discrimination, to improve equality of opportunity, and to promote good relations between different groups of people.

This duty applies to all our services, policies, decisions and employment practices. It covers a wide range of protected characteristics, including age, disability, race, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment.

We meet these legal requirements by regularly assessing the impact of our decisions, involving people with lived experience, publishing information about our progress, and setting clear equality outcomes. We also use data, feedback and engagement to understand where barriers exist and where change is needed.

While we are confident that we are meeting our legal duties, we recognise that there is always more to do. We are committed to continuous improvement and to strengthening how equality and inclusion are built into everyday practice, so that our services and workplaces are fair, accessible and inclusive for everyone.

Our focus remains on turning policy into practice, ensuring fairness, dignity and inclusion are experienced by both our staff and the communities we serve.

Equality Outcomes

Background

All Health Boards across NHS Scotland are required to develop and publish a set of equality outcomes to further one or more of the three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). We agreed the six outcomes below and the next few pages will outline what we've achieved so far for our workforce, for our patients and for the wider community.

Our Priorities for Change

Our six Equality Outcomes focus on key areas that will make a real difference:

- 1. Accessibility** – Ensuring NHS services, workplaces, and information are fully inclusive for all.
- 2. Awareness, Knowledge & Understanding** – Strengthening staff education and training so that equality, diversity, and inclusion are embedded in everything we do.
- 3. Inclusive Environments** – Creating a workplace and healthcare system where everyone feels safe, valued and respected.
- 4. Neurodiversity** – Improving understanding and support for neurodivergent individuals, both in the workplace and within healthcare services.
- 5. Anti-Racism Plan** – Taking proactive action to challenge racism and ensure fair treatment for all ethnic backgrounds.
- 6. Health Inequalities** - Tackling the root causes of poor health, including the impact of poverty and socio-economic barriers.

Outcome 1: Accessibility

What you told us:

You shared with us that you wanted us to:

- Improve physical and sensory accessibility across our services.
- Make digital services accessible, while keeping non-digital options available.
- Strengthen interpretation and communication support.
- Provide clearer, more consistent workplace adjustments for staff.
- Work in a more joined-up way across organisations to reduce duplication and improve impact.

What we've done so far:

- Carried out accessibility reviews and addressed key physical barriers.
- Embedded equality within digital programmes, with safeguards against digital exclusion.
- Improved interpretation processes and increased visibility of communication needs.
- Developed a streamlined workplace adjustment pathway and updated the Staff Ability Passport.
- Strengthened staff training and partnership working to support inclusive practice.

What we'll do next:

- Continue accessibility reviews and act on lived experience feedback.
- Further improve digital accessibility while maintaining non-digital options.
- Monitor complaints, compliments and service uptake to measure progress.
- Complete improvements to interpretation services.
- Launch and embed the new workplace adjustment pathway.
- Strengthen partnership working to ensure a joined-up approach.

Outcome 2: Awareness, Knowledge & Understanding

What you told us:

You shared with us that you wanted us to:

- Listen more closely to lived experience to understand real barriers and misconceptions and misinformation.
- Improve cultural competence and inclusive behaviours across our workforce.
- Strengthen visible support for LGBTQ+ colleagues, carers and other underrepresented groups.
- Equip leaders with the skills, confidence and tools to embed equality in everyday practice.
- Actively recognise and celebrate diversity in a meaningful and inclusive way.

What we've done so far:

- Expanded inclusive leadership training, including Unconscious Bias and Active Bystander programmes.
- Strengthened visibility and structured support for LGBTQ+ staff and carers.
- Increased use of lived experience feedback to shape services and workplace culture.
- Improved and embedded Equality Impact Assessments within decision-making.
- Developed accessible learning resources and promoted diversity awareness events to increase engagement.

What we'll do next:

- Continue targeted outreach to hear directly from underrepresented groups.
- Embed cultural competence and inclusive leadership into core training.
- Strengthen support for staff networks, LGBTQ+ colleagues and carers.
- Further improve the EQIA process and expand accessible learning resources.

Outcome 3: Inclusive Environments

What you told us:

You shared with us that you wanted us to:

- Make it safer and easier for staff to raise concerns about discrimination and harassment.
- Strengthen staff networks so underrepresented voices are heard.
- Improve diversity in leadership and governance.
- Design spaces and services that are inclusive, accessible and trauma-informed.
- Better support patients and staff who face additional barriers, particularly at key transition points.

What we've done so far:

- Embedded compassionate leadership and culture change principles to strengthen psychological safety.
- Updated Speak Up and Whistleblowing resources to improve clarity and access.
- Established and supported five active staff networks, increasing visibility of lived experience at Board level.
- Launched a new Leadership and Management Framework and widened outreach for Board recruitment.
- Co-designed inclusive spaces and developed tools to improve accessibility and communication.
- Established a Young People's Transition Group to reduce inequalities between children's and adult services.

What we'll do next:

- Continue strengthening safe and supportive routes for raising concerns.
- Further embed inclusive leadership and broaden representation.
- Support and grow staff networks.
- Expand inclusive design across our spaces and services.
- Continue reducing inequalities in care pathways and employment practices.

Outcome 4: Neurodiversity

What you told us:

You shared with us that you wanted us to:

- Improve understanding of neurodiversity across our workforce.
- Provide clearer, practical support for neurodivergent staff and patients.
- Create calmer, more neuro-inclusive healthcare environments.
- Ensure recruitment and workplace processes are supportive and inclusive.
- Listen directly to lived experience when designing improvements.

What we've done so far:

- Delivered neurodiversity awareness sessions in partnership with staff and third sector organisations.
- Developed a Neurodiversity Toolkit (launching March 2026) to support neuro-inclusive practice for both neurodivergent staff and patients.
- Supported an active Disability and Neurodiversity Staff Network, which has shaped the Ability Passport and workplace adjustments.
- Begun practical environmental improvements, including clearer signage and exploring “quiet hour” models.
- Strengthened guidance on staff reasonable adjustments, with increasing proactive engagement from managers and staff and signposting to support like Able Futures and other digital therapies.

What we'll do next:

- Launch and embed the Neurodiversity Toolkit across services.
- Continue expanding neurodiversity training and inclusive communication guidance.
- Pilot and evaluate neuro-inclusive environmental adjustments where appropriate.
- Further strengthen neuro-inclusive recruitment and workplace adjustment processes.

Outcome 5: Anti-Racism Plan

What you told us:

You shared with us that you wanted us to:

- Improve the collection, quality and transparency of our workforce and community data.
- Better identify and respond to racism and discrimination.
- Work closely with minority ethnic communities and stakeholders to shape our Anti-Racism Plan.
- Strengthen outreach to communities who experience health inequalities.
- Re-establish meaningful engagement structures to ensure lived experience informs decision-making.

What we've done so far:

- Launched our Anti-Racism Plan and moved into implementation phase.
- Strengthened workforce data through improved use of our systems and development of a Protected Characteristics questionnaire.
- Enhanced reporting systems to better identify and review racism-related incidents.
- Established a dedicated Anti-Racism Working Group, working closely with the Ethnic Diversity Network and Scottish Government.
- Continued targeted outreach with minority communities, including Gypsy/Traveller communities and New Scots programmes.
- Contributed to national Anti-Racism and health inequality workstreams.
- Begun reinstating wider engagement structures and exploring a Youth Panel to strengthen participation.

What we'll do next:

- Continue implementing and monitoring delivery of the Anti-Racism Plan.
- Pilot and roll out improved data collection and incident reporting tools.
- Strengthen community engagement and targeted outreach activity.

You can view the plan [here](#)

Outcome 6: Health Inequalities

What you told us:

You shared with us that you wanted us to:

- Better understand local health inequalities using data and lived experience.
- Strengthen partnership working to address gaps in access and outcomes.
- Work more closely with Anchor institutions and community partners to tackle inequalities in a coordinated way.
- Ensure our actions are evidence-based, measurable and aligned with the Fairer Scotland Duty.
- Treat health inequalities as a strategic priority with a clear action plan.

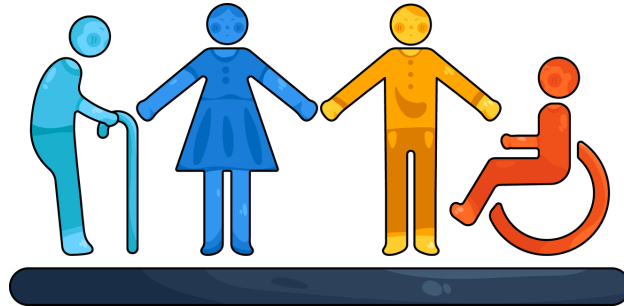
What we've done so far:

- Worked more closely with public health teams, community partners and national organisations to better understand local health inequalities.
- Used data to target outreach in areas such as screening and immunisation, focusing on communities most at risk.
- Strengthened how equality is considered in decision-making, including our duties under the Fairer Scotland Duty.
- Partnered with schools and other services to create more inclusive, communication-friendly environments.
- Made health inequalities a recognised strategic risk and started developing a dedicated action plan to address them.

What we'll do next:

- Put our Health Inequalities Action Plan into practice.
- Keep improving how we use data and lived experience to identify where gaps exist.
- Work more closely with local partners and community organisations to take joint action.
- Track progress to make sure our actions are making a real difference.

Get Involved! Working with People and Communities



Ongoing engagement is central to delivering our Equality and Inclusion Strategic Framework. We know that meaningful progress is only possible when we listen to, learn from, and work alongside the people who use our services and those who work within them.

Lived experience helps us understand what is working well, where barriers remain, and what needs to change. We are committed to continuing this dialogue and welcome involvement from individuals, communities, staff and partners.

There are a number of ways to get involved, including sharing feedback, taking part in engagement events or consultations, joining staff or community networks, and contributing lived experience to service improvement and policy development.

By working together, we can ensure our approach remains relevant, inclusive and responsive, and that our services continue to improve for everyone.

**To find out more, please get in touch via
FV.equality@nhs.scot or call 01324 590886**

Summary and Next Steps

Over the past year, we have made good progress in delivering our Equality and Inclusion Strategic Framework (2025 to 2029).

We have started to turn our commitments into action, strengthened how equality and inclusion are considered across our work, and learned from feedback and lived experience. This has helped us improve how we work and how our services are experienced.

While this progress is encouraging, we know there is more to do. Over the next year, our focus will be on building on what is working well, improving consistency across services, and strengthening the impact of our actions.

We will continue to listen, learn and respond as we work with our people and our communities to make sure our approach reflects real experiences and needs.

We remain ambitious about becoming a fairer, more inclusive organisation. By maintaining momentum, being open about our progress, and continuing to improve, we aim to deliver meaningful and lasting change that benefits everyone.

Alternative Formats

We want you to be able to access this document in the way that best suits you. To request this document be made available in another format, please contact:



Phone: 01324 590886



Text: 07990 690605



Email: FV.interpretation@nhs.scot



01324 590886



FV.equality@nhs.scot



Equality, Inclusion and Wellbeing Service,
Forth Valley Sensory Centre



<https://nhsforthvalley.com>