Equality Impact Assessment Report 2023

Title: Widening Access Framework

NES directorate or department: Workforce Directorate

Date Report Completed: 5th April 2023

# Introduction

* Action is being taken to establish and implement a Widening Access Framework which will provide guidance and support for NES colleagues to support operational and strategic planning.
* The purpose of the Framework is to enhance awareness of the principle of Widening Access, offer tools and approaches to individuals and teams to support action planning and to provide a model for sharing good practice and lessons learned
* This Framework is underpinned by Scottish Government strategies and policies which aim to address inequalities, including the impact of the role of the NHS as an anchor institution.
* The aim is also to enhance reporting of NES’s contribution to this national agenda, aligned with the NES Corporate Strategy.
* This is a new initiative and is being developed by a group of NES staff working across all Directorates.

# Evidence

* We have gathered and reviewed primary and secondary research on how widening access has been defined across a number of settings.
* This has supported the drafting of a working definition which has been shared with a range of individuals and groups including those who may be affected by access issues, those who will be using the Framework and those who need to approve the Framework. This is presented below:

 “Widening access to careers in health and social care so that, whatever a person’s life experience, they have better access to job opportunities and learning and development at all levels”

* We have engaged and collaborated with external partners, including individuals and groups that are impacted by a lack of access and those with expertise in this area, to identify systemic barriers, potential solutions, and areas of good practice.
* We have considered our strategic priorities, which explicitly highlights Widening Access as a key goal for NES.
* Within NES, we have used a co-production approach to explore how the Framework is understood. We aim for the Framework to be engaging and relevant to a range of colleagues and will continue to test and seek feedback from users.

# Assessment

We have considered how this work will impact on the Public Sector Equality Duty. The main aim of the Framework is to make it easier for NES colleagues and decision makers to do the right thing when it comes to the three elements of this Duty. Alongside a written Framework and resources, colleagues will also have access to a support network and experienced partners from whom they can seek advice on:

* How to progress equality of opportunity for people who experience inequalities?
* How to eliminate discrimination, victimisation or harassment or other unlawful conduct?
* How to promote good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?

We believe our main impact will be on the first two elements of the Duty as our guidance is focused on access to learning and careers in health and care.

# Next Steps

The Equality Impact Assessment has informed the following actions:

1. Explicit reference to the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Framework
2. Extended consultation with individuals and groups that may be impacted by limited access to learning and job opportunities, including NES staff networks
3. Agreement of a six-monthly evaluation cycle to ensure resource is kept relevant and useful.
4. Proposal for assessment of impact on specific groups (protected characteristics / socio-economic status) to be completed in 2024.

The evidence shows that there is no potential for unlawful discrimination, and we have built in actions to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

We are proposing the establishment of a Widening Access Reference group who will design and implement an evaluation approach, working to support existing performance monitoring and reporting.

This Assessment Report will be reviewed in Summer 2024.

# Sign-off

Director: Janice Gibson, AD for ODLL

Date: 18/12/23