

People Strategy

2024-26

October 2024

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Foreword

This People Strategy was developed as Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) reached its third birthday. We are now a fully staffed organisation with a substantial amount of experience and learning under our belts.

This Strategy pulls together that learning, drawing from our work creating our first [Equalities and Diversity Policy](#) and [Equalities Mainstreaming Report](#), recruitment success and our approach to supporting our team. It also reflects the lived experience of those that have joined ESS from the point the organisation was established in October 2021.

We felt the key to developing our Strategy and action plan was to discuss, debate and decide its structure and intent ourselves – by the team, for the team. In this document you will read the background to this work, the key pillars of our approach, the planning in place and our ambition to create a culture that we all want to work in and be proud of.

Planning includes actions that we need to deliver as a public body, but it also sets out what we as individuals can do to bring this work to life. We are proud to be [civil servants](#) working in this new independent environmental public body. We acknowledge that this is a corporate document and comes with a set of parameters we need to work within. However, it is written first and foremost with people at its heart, with the aspiration of providing a strategic framework that allows us (both as individuals and an organisation) to prosper.

We look forward to building on this first step through sharing the success of this valuable work.

The People Strategy Working Group

1. Introduction and overview

1.1 This Strategy draws together, for the first time, our wider range of people related plans, policies and initiatives under three key pillars, as set out below and in [section 1](#):

- **attracting** and keeping the right people
- **developing** and nurturing our people
- **enabling** great performance and delivery

1.2 We believe it is fundamental that all aspects of our related activities prioritise ‘diversity, equality and inclusion’ and ‘wellbeing’ in everything we do, to positively shape our organisational culture, as set out in [section 2](#).

1.3 To achieve this, we will both invest in the success of this People Strategy and its related action plan, and ensure that we establish a positive organisational culture. We feel it is important to ensure our culture is developed organically, enabled and supported by senior staff and the Board, with best practice and wellbeing championed from the top down. On this basis we have opted to reflect holistically on what culture means to ESS as our People Strategy moves forward, as set out in [section 3](#).

1.4 An action plan gathering together all our ambitions related to these three sections is attached at [annex 1](#). Progress against this plan will be reviewed in March each year and updates provided in ESS’ publicly available Annual Report.

1.5 We are confident our People Strategy places us in a strong position to meet our ambitions. The development of this document sets out the opportunities ESS can deliver as an organisation, alongside recognising and setting out the role for individuals themselves as part of this planning.

2. Background

2.1 Before this People Strategy overview was created, a range of policies and documents were developed in ESS' early years. This included the development of our [Equality and Diversity Policy](#), [equalities mainstreaming report](#) and associated action plans.

2.2 All of these plans were developed as ESS' core team grew and the organisation established its first [Strategic Plan](#), which included a section on our values and principles.

2.3 In order to draw together these existing plans and objectives in a simple and effective way, this People Strategy has been co-created across our teams. We believe this is the key to delivering our ambitious aims successfully. Through the work of the People Strategy working group, with support from our human resources advisors [AAB People](#), three key pillars of work have been developed that will help focus all our people related ambitions.

2.4 Alongside these pillars, additional bridging activities were incorporated into our wider set of actions, alongside a recommended approach to developing our organisational culture development and reporting. All our people related planning has now been pulled together in one cross-referenced action plan set out at [annex 1](#).

2.5 Our existing work and action planning has been equality impact assessed, with the summary reports made publicly available¹. No specific negative effects were identified following the introduction of these policies. Our relevant Unions have also been kept up-to-date on our work and our Board Equalities Champion updated as our planning progresses.

2.6 An overview [map](#) of this background activity is set out on the next page.

¹ [Equality and Diversity Policy impact assessment](#)

Our people related activity

Strategic Plan (2022-2025)

Organisational values

We are: independent, transparent, trusted and effective

Our staff feel: respected, included, innovative and collaborative

[Strategic Plan](#)

Shaping our organisational culture

We will:

develop a supportive culture and working environment

1.1 People Strategy

Attracting and keeping the right people

Developing and nurturing our people

Enabling great performance and delivery

Wider range of specific policies

Examples:
fairness at work,
recruitment,
hybrid working

[Explore | SG](#)

[Thrive](#)

[\(learn.link\)](#)

Equalities and Diversity Policy principles

Respect, inclusivity, fairness and support

[Equalities and Diversity Policy](#)

Mainstreaming Equalities equality outcome planning and commitments (2023-2027)

Outcome 1: ESS' performance is enhanced by having a workforce whose diversity is more representative of Scotland

Outcome 2: ESS' staff are empowered by removing barriers to an accessible and inclusive working environment

Outcome 3: all people of Scotland can readily understand and are enabled to access ESS' services

[Mainstreaming Equalities Report](#)

3. Section 1: three key pillars

3.1 As set out above, three key pillars have been established to bring together our people related work.

Pillar one: to **attract** and keep the best people

- we recognise our future success depends upon attracting people with the right skills, experiences and mindset. Seeking to attract and keep people with potential and the relevant experience, from a range of sectors and all walks of life, is a priority for our organisation

Pillar two: to **develop** and nurture our people

- as part of ESS' journey to become a learning organisation, we seek to create the conditions for effective personal development and growth through experience on the job and through developing effective relationships, as well as through formal coaching and training. Recognising the challenges faced by our team in delivering 'the day job', we wish to develop an approach to learning that allows people to prioritise their professional skills development and career aspirations, while also meeting their overall performance goals

Pillar three: to **enable** great performance and delivery

- we recognise how motivating it is to work in a place where personal growth and development is encouraged, where ownership for choices and decisions is enabled and everyone is supported to be the best they can be. Our People Strategy seeks to achieve this within ESS by focusing our activities towards enabling great performance and delivery, tailored to individuals. We will draw on and develop the expertise of our people, being open to innovation and learning, and our willingness to change in order to continuously improve who we are, where we work, and the tools, technologies and systems we use

3.2 Our newly drawn together [action plan](#) cross-references against these pillars, demonstrating how we will achieve and measure the success of this work.

4. Section 2: prioritising diversity, equality, inclusion and wellbeing

4.1 As ESS employees, we set the tone for all that we do. Different collaborative approaches have been utilised to develop this people related work including: the development of the Strategic Plan; People Strategy working group discussions; equalities planning; organisation pulse surveys; equality impact assessment outputs; full team day initiatives; alongside learning from the knowledge and evidence provided by our partner organisations. Developing our approach in this way enables a healthy and positive working environment for all and ensures our planning is developed by our teams, for our teams.

4.2 Diversity, equality, inclusion and wellbeing are central to ESS' future success. We firmly believe that everyone is unique and should be respected for their differences. Our future success depends on celebrating a diverse mix of talented individuals.

4.3 We plan to make this a reality by:

- ensuring psychological safety – so individuals feel able to speak up, offer ideas and ask questions – to help colleagues thrive and grow together
- improving inclusivity – to leverage different skills and perspectives, improve decision-making, help ESS become more creative and innovative and better meet the needs of the public and stakeholders we serve
- building a diverse workforce – to keep attracting, retaining and growing talent from different backgrounds and with different characteristics

4.4 We will progress our ambitious aims in this area and monitor progress via our robust and comprehensive [Equality and Diversity Policy](#) and [equalities mainstreaming report](#). All action planning set against this work is now incorporated into our [action plan](#) set out at [annex 1](#).

5. Section 3: shaping our organisational culture

5.1 We understand that culture is hard to define in any organisation. It is not a static object that can easily be measured, or a problem which can be addressed through a set procedure, but rather, a dynamic process to continually consider and adapt to.

5.2 Overall, we believe that how we do things across ESS matters. This includes through leadership, and the individual daily actions, behaviours, and interactions we have with others. These combine to shape not just our own experience, but also that of our stakeholders.

5.3 Providing the right working environment and a great people experience is critical to ESS' success as it impacts our ability to recruit and keep talented people. This is why our planning pays attention to the concept of culture across the organisation, keeping it aligned with ESS' purpose, values and future aspirations.

5.4 We aspire to achieve a high trust culture, where everyone: leads by example; shows respect for individuals and decisions made; and feels empowered and enabled to do our work, including demonstrating accountability and taking timely decisions. By taking steps to encourage and support these behaviours, we will attain the enabling culture that will ensure that ESS is a great place to work while we deliver on our strategic outcomes.

5.5 As set out previously, we feel it is important to ensure our organisational culture is developed organically, enabled and supported by senior staff and the Board, with best practice and wellbeing championed from the top down. On this basis we have opted to reflect holistically on what culture means to ESS as our People Strategy moves forward.

5.6 We will seek to explore the concept further, in conjunction with our existing values, and reflect on the progress of our People Strategy to help better understand the behaviours expected from us to establish a sustainable culture for our organisation.

5.7 This work will be carried out through full organisational workshops established in parallel to the development of ESS' next Strategic Plan, which will be submitted to the Scottish Parliament by October 2025 for consideration. The outcome of this work will inform our new Strategic Plan and our People Strategy as it develops.

6. Next steps

6.1 Our team-led working group, which enabled the creation of our People Strategy, will continue to meet on a quarterly basis. This group will review the progress the organisation is making across the strategic ambitions outlined. It will also support the further development of any specific actions which may be required to achieve our key objectives within each area.

6.2 Our People Strategy [action plan](#) will be reviewed twice a year by the Executive Team. This will ensure relevant feedback and data is considered and that any published changes to the People Strategy fully aligns with our overall Strategic Plan.

6.3 We will publicly report an overview of progress as part of our Annual Report and Accounts each year.

6.4 If you have any questions on this People Strategy, would like to volunteer to join the working group, or have suggestions for people related activity, please email HR.

Annex 1 – Action Plan

Key:

- lines highlighted in blue are bridging actions developed by the People Strategy working group
- lines that aren't highlighted are actions developed previously through our equalities related planning
- lines highlighted in green are existing monitoring actions already identified

Not all actions have specific monitoring criteria set against them, as some are still in development. As these are finalised, they will be listed within the live internal action plan which can be found [here](#).

The internal live action plan also contains more detail on lead responsibilities and new developments.

People Strategy Pillar	Equality Outcome	Action	Area	Policy Commitment	For action by	Status
Attract	Outcome 1	We will develop a clear and sustainable recruitment plan, which strengthens and introduces new channels for attracting a diverse range of external candidates to the organisation.	People - Recruitment Policies and services	Ensuring fair, transparent and equitable recruitment and appointment policies are followed to support a diverse workforce.	2025/26	In progress
Attract	Outcome 1	We will deliver a successful and comprehensive approach to on-boarding, which facilitates new members of the team being set up to succeed.	People - Support and development	Requiring continuous training, and supporting a mixed learning journey for staff, including mandatory e-learning on equality diversity and inclusion.	2024/25	In progress
Attract	Outcome 1	We will review and simplify recruitment systems and processes to enable the best possible experience for all involved in line with Civil Service requirements, with a view to reducing the average time to fill any vacancy.	People - Recruitment Policies and services	Ensuring fair, transparent and equitable recruitment and appointment policies are followed to support a diverse workforce.	2025/26	In progress
Attract	Outcome 1	We will build on our existing business-wide workforce plan, aligned with both our Business and Strategic plan.	Policies and services	Ensuring fair, transparent and equitable recruitment and appointment policies are followed to support a diverse workforce.	2025/26	In progress
Attract	Outcome 1	We will position ESS as a great place to work through enhancing our offering (for example role design and culture) and employer brand.	People - Support and development	Ensuring a suitable working environment for all.	2025/26	In progress
Attract	Outcome 1	We will review our recruitment policies, and equalities benchmarking, to tie in with ongoing equalities reporting.	People - Recruitment Policies and services	Ensuring fair, transparent and equitable recruitment and appointment policies are followed to support a diverse workforce.	2025/26	In progress

Continued: People Strategy Pillar	Equality Outcome	Action	Area	Policy Commitment	For action by	Status
Attract	Outcome 1	We will set up systems to actively monitor and understand, as far as possible, how many applications are made under the Disability Confident Scheme.	Policies and services	Ensuring fair, transparent and equitable recruitment and appointment policies are followed to support a diverse workforce.	2023/24	In progress
Attract	Outcome 1	We will increase and diversify the organisations and networks we use to advertise our job vacancies.	People - Recruitment	Actively promoting employment opportunities as widely as possible, engaging with professional bodies, equalities and interest groups to raise the profile of ESS.	2023/24	In progress
Attract	Outcome 1	We will develop our Civil Service Careers webpage to embed equality principles.	People - Recruitment	Actively promoting employment opportunities as widely as possible, engaging with professional bodies, equalities and interest groups to raise the profile of ESS.	2024/25	Complete ESS civil service webpage
Attract	Outcome 1	We will implement a programme of student placements within ESS.	People - Recruitment	Actively promoting employment opportunities as widely as possible, engaging with professional bodies, equalities and interest groups to raise the profile of ESS.	Ongoing	Complete Annual internship opportunities run through SGSSS
Attract	Outcome 1	We will engage with educational institutions to raise awareness of ESS in general and as a potential employer.	People - Recruitment	Actively promoting employment opportunities as widely as possible, engaging with professional bodies, equalities and interest groups to raise the profile of ESS.	Ongoing	In progress
Attract	Outcome 1	We will engage with mentoring programmes to raise our profile with underrepresented individuals and share knowledge and expertise in our field.	People - Recruitment	Actively promoting employment opportunities as widely as possible, engaging with professional bodies, equalities and interest groups to raise the profile of ESS.	Ongoing	Complete Mentee blog example
Attract	Outcome 1	We will ensure all staff taking part in recruitment interviews have specific interviewer training.	People - Recruitment	Ensuring fair, transparent and equitable recruitment and appointment policies are followed to support a diverse workforce.	2024/25	Complete Learning and Development programme
Attract	Outcome 3	We will introduce Contact-BSL links to staff email signatures.	Policies and services	Developing our communication with stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors to broaden our reach, in particular to marginalised or disadvantaged communities and groups, to ensure they are aware of our role and how to raise concerns.	2023/24	Complete Contact BSL
Attract	Outcome 3	We will implement an engagement programme to raise awareness of ESS amongst different communities.	Policies and services	Developing our communication with stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors to broaden our reach, in particular to marginalised or disadvantaged communities and groups, to ensure they are aware of our role and how to raise concerns.	2024/25	Ongoing

Continued: People Strategy Pillar	Equality Outcome	Action	Area	Policy Commitment	For action by	Status
Develop	Outcome 1	We will create and implement an effective learning and development programme across the organisation.	People - Support and development	Requiring continuous training, and supporting a mixed learning journey for staff, including mandatory e-learning on equality diversity and inclusion.	2024/25	Complete Learning and Development programme
Develop	Outcome 1	We will develop a feedback culture where individuals feel confident to provide effective and professional feedback, which should become typical practice at all levels.	People - Support and development	Taking positive action where we identify a need.	2025/26	Ongoing
Develop	Outcome 1	We will develop a supportive culture and working environment, which values diversity and individual circumstances.	People - Support and development	Requiring inclusive culture training for all staff, to support an inclusive organisational culture.	2025/26	Ongoing
Develop	Outcome 1	We will complete effective appraisals and objective setting.	People - Support and development Policies and services	Requiring continuous training, and supporting a mixed learning journey for staff, including mandatory e-learning on equality diversity and inclusion.	2024/25	Ongoing
Develop	Outcome 1	We will celebrate our successes, whereby we recognise great performance, achievements and deliveries across the full span of the organisation.	People - Support and development	Taking positive action where we identify a need.	2025/26	Ongoing
Develop	Outcome 1	We will identify and train an Equality Champion(s) within our staff and our Board membership.	People - Support and development	Embedding consideration of the general duty through our governance structures, and in reports and board papers and evidencing that consideration.	2023/24	Complete Board Champions: Equality Sustainability Cyber
Develop	Outcome 1	We will increase the visibility of equalities considerations in our Board meetings by including a regular update from the Board Equality Champion.	Policies and services	Embedding consideration of the general duty through our governance structures, and in reports and board papers and evidencing that consideration.	2023/24	Complete Board Champions: Equality
Develop	Outcome 1	We will develop an enhanced mandatory equalities training programme for both staff and Board members.	People - Support and development	Requiring continuous training, and supporting a mixed learning journey for staff, including mandatory e-learning on equality diversity and inclusion.	2024/25	In progress

Continued: People Strategy Pillar	Equality Outcome	Action	Area	Policy Commitment	For action by	Status
Develop	Outcome 2	We will raise awareness of accessibility considerations within our staff and Board with appropriate training.	People - Support and development	Ensuring a suitable working environment for all.	Ongoing	In progress
Develop	Outcome 2	We will explore options to set up an equalities working group with organisations sharing our office building.	People - Support and development	Ensuring a suitable working environment for all.	2024/25	In progress
Develop	Outcome 3	We will enhance our training offer for staff and Board members relating to accessible communications.	People - Support and development	Ensuring that our communication methodology, be it written or verbal, meets the principles set out within our Communication and Engagement Strategy.	Ongoing	In progress
Develop	Outcome 3	We will improve our process for monitoring equality and diversity data of our service users to increase response rates.	Policies and services	Ensure we consider equalities duties when developing new and revised policies and practices or amending existing ones. Where we identify potential for impacts, to undertake Equality Impact Assessment as needed. Ensure equality assessment results are published as required by the legislation.	2024/25	In progress
Develop	Outcome 3	We will support training as needed in Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) and embed Equality Impact Assessment into our policy development and review process as relevant.	People - Support and development Policies and services	Ensure we consider equalities duties when developing new and revised policies and practices or amending existing ones. Where we identify potential for impacts, to undertake Equality Impact Assessment as needed. Ensure equality assessment results are published as required by the legislation.	2024/25	In progress
Develop	Outcome 3	We will monitor our progress against this outcome by: carrying out an accessibility audit of our website; monitoring feedback on accessibility from stakeholder events; monitoring the protected characteristics of people making representations to us.	Policies and services	Ensure we consider equalities duties when developing new and revised policies and practices or amending existing ones. Where we identify potential for impacts, to undertake Equality Impact Assessment as needed. Ensure equality assessment results are published as required by the legislation.	2024/25	In progress
Develop	n/a	We will create an accessibility checklist.	Policies and services	Ensuring location, venues, timing and accessibility of events are considered to support attendance and engagement from all stakeholders.	2024/25	In progress
Develop	n/a	We will ensure our equalities policy includes hyperlinks to our various internal policies and guidance mentioned throughout.	Policies and services	Taking positive action where we identify a need.	2024/25	Not started

Continued: People Strategy Pillar	Equality Outcome	Action	Area	Policy Commitment	For action by	Status
Develop	n/a	We will ensure the statutory equality duty (general duty) is considered in our decision making processes as required.	Policies and services	Ensuring the general duty is considered in our decision making processes as set out in our operational guidance, and across a range of services.	2024/25	Complete Pathways link to guidance and policies
Develop	n/a	We will embed consideration of the general duty through our governance structures, and in reports and Board papers and evidence that consideration. e.g Standing items Exec team agenda/ add to board paper template, include in minutes.	Policies and services	Embedding consideration of the general duty through our governance structures, and in reports and board papers and evidencing that consideration.	2024/25	Complete Pathways link to templates
Enable	Outcome 2	We will seek to develop an enabling organisational culture, in conjunction with our existing values. This work will feed inform redevelopment of the ESS Strategic Plan.	Policies and services	Ensuring a suitable working environment for all.	2024/25	Not started
Enable	Outcome 2	We will review and develop our mechanisms to measure the success of our People Strategy action plan. This work will inform the redevelopment of the ESS Strategic Plan.	Policies and services	Ensuring we review and improve our plans and processes.	2025/26	Ongoing
Enable	Outcome 2	We will develop a strong network of team members who are supported to be the best they can be.	People - Support and development	Requiring inclusive culture training for all staff, to support an inclusive organisational culture.	2025/26	Ongoing
Enable	Outcome 1	We will offer optional behavioural profiling for everyone to support effective learning and communication across the organisation and foster emotionally intelligent team members.	People - Support and development	Requiring continuous training, and supporting a mixed learning journey for staff, including mandatory e-learning on equality diversity and inclusion.	2024/25	Complete Learning and Development programme
Enable	Outcome 2	We will regularly review our systems and technology to ensure systems and technology is sufficient to aid efficiency and drive our continuous improvement aspirations.	People - Support and development Policies and services	Taking positive action where we identify a need.	2025/26	Ongoing
Enable	Outcome 2	We will implement project reflections, to identify and develop learnings across teams.	People - Support and development	Taking positive action where we identify a need.	2025/26	Ongoing

Continued: People Strategy Pillar	Equality Outcome	Action	Area	Policy Commitment	For action by	Status
Enable	Outcome 1	We will embed Employee Diversity and Monitoring forms into staff inductions.	People - Support and development	Taking positive action where we identify a need.	2023/24	Complete Pathways link to HR information
Enable	Outcome 1	We will publish an Equality and Diversity Policy.	Policies and services	Ensure we consider equalities duties when developing new and revised policies and practices or amending existing ones. Where we identify potential for impacts, to undertake Equality Impact Assessment as needed.	2023/24	Complete Learning and Development programme
Enable	Outcome 1	We will monitor our progress against this outcome by: collecting and monitoring data on employee protected characteristics; collecting and monitoring data on applications made under the Disability Confident Scheme; monitoring activity on our Civil Service Careers EDI pages. When measuring progress against this outcome, it is important to recognise our small size and low turnover rate. We are pleased to have a low turnover of staff and a high staff engagement index. However this may also present a challenge in diversifying the makeup of our organisation.	People - Recruitment People - Support and development Policies and services	Ensure we consider equalities duties when developing new and revised policies and practices or amending existing ones. Where we identify potential for impacts, to undertake Equality Impact Assessment as needed.	2026/27	In progress
Enable	Outcome 2	We will run workshops with staff to inform the design of a new office space.	People - Support and development	Ensuring a suitable working environment for all.	2023/24	Complete Carried out by Space Solutions .
Enable	Outcome 2	We will engage with accessibility consultants to inform the design of a new office space.	People - Support and development	Ensuring a suitable working environment for all.	2023/24	Complete Carried out by Space Solutions .
Enable	Outcome 2	We will continue to develop and offer a catalogue of homeworking and hybrid equipment.	People - Support and development	Ensuring a suitable working environment for all.	Ongoing	Complete Pathways link to HR information
Enable	Outcome 2	We will train a member of staff in Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments.	People - Support and development	Ensuring a suitable working environment for all.	2023/24	Complete Learning and Development programme

Continued: People Strategy Pillar	Equality Outcome	Action	Area	Policy Commitment	For action by	Status
Enable	Outcome 2	We will develop our own accessibility audit checklist for any changes to our workspace.	Policies and services	Ensuring a suitable working environment for all.	2024/25	Not started
Enable	Outcome 2	We will monitor our progress against this outcome by: gathering feedback from our staff on our redesigned office space; gathering feedback from our staff on their homeworking set-up; achieving Disability Confident Employer Level 2.	People - Support and development Policies and services	Ensuring a suitable working environment for all.	2024/25	In progress
Enable	Outcome 3	We will regularly review our Accessibility Guide.	Policies and services	Ensuring that our communication methodology, be it written or verbal, meets the principles set out within our Communication and Engagement Strategy.	Ongoing	In progress
Enable	Outcome 3	We will redevelop our website to improve access to our online information and services.	Policies and services	Developing our communication with stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors to broaden our reach, in particular to marginalised or disadvantaged communities and groups, to ensure they are aware of our role and how to raise concerns.	2023/24	Complete Home - Environmental Standards Scotland
Enable	Outcome 3	We will seek accessibility-specific feedback following stakeholder events.	Policies and services	Ensuring location, venues, timing and accessibility of events are considered to support attendance and engagement from all stakeholders.	2023/24	Complete Pathways forms
Enable	Outcome 3	We will make clear the availability of documents in alternative languages and formats, where possible.	Policies and services	Developing our communication with stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors to broaden our reach, in particular to marginalised or disadvantaged communities and groups, to ensure they are aware of our role and how to raise concerns.	2024/25	Complete Accessibility information
Enable	n/a	Ensure that wellbeing is discussed as part of monthly conversations.	People - Support and development	Ensuring a suitable working environment for all.	2023/24	Complete Pathways forms
Enable	n/a	Monitoring responses from pulse surveys and ensuring that management action is taken in response to them.	People - Support and development	Ensuring a suitable working environment for all.	2023/24	Complete Pathways forms

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