



NECS2028

Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy

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Contact details (for further information)	
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1. NECS2028 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Strategy

NECS (North of England Care System Support) is an NHS organisation established in 2013 as part of NHS England. NECS is a care system support organisation that works to help health and social care customers meet their strategic and operational goals to improve outcomes and increase efficiency. NECS, like other commissioning support units (CSUs) across the country, operates on an income-only basis with all operating costs recovered from income received for the services we deliver.

NECS is unique in the health and care sector. As an operating unit of NHS England, we operate as a 'not for profit' business.

We are continuously improving healthcare through supporting system wide working with extensive engagement across a range of customers including (but not exhaustive) Integrated Care Systems and Boards (ICS and ICB), NHS Trusts, NHS Foundation Trusts, Voluntary Sector organisations, Primary Care Networks, GP Federations and individual GP practices. We offer core service portfolios designed to reflect all the key elements of the commissioning life cycle providing an integrated, flexible and expert service.

NECS' core values, vision and social purpose define who we are, how we will behave and the commitment we have to making life-changing improvements to the communities we serve.

Our approach and commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is driven by our Vision, Mission and Social Purpose. Our vision is **to be the delivery partner of choice to the NHS for the benefit of patients and our communities**.

NECS has a clear social purpose **to make our own direct contribution towards reducing health inequalities by creating jobs and generating wealth for the communities we serve**. Sustainable business is at the heart of our success to date and our plans for the future and we are committed to creating a sustainable inclusive society.

As a value led organisation, NECS will drive positive change through our focus on the following priorities from our business plan:

- Transformation and modernisation
- Partnership working
- Workforce
- Sustainability

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We are working with our supply chain to ensure social value and net zero is a principle within all procurement decisions. We are supporting innovation and creating opportunities to engage with local suppliers within the communities in which we operate.

We care about climate change, and as an operating unit of NHS England, we have a crucial part to play in reducing carbon emissions. We have made some significant progress to reduce our carbon footprint working together with our NHS partners. We are growing our green network to ensure we really are doing everything we possibly can both as an organisation and as individuals to drive down our carbon footprint and deliver the Greening Government Commitments and do our part to contribute to Delivering a 'Net Zero' National Health Service"

NECS is proud of our achievements and is confident that future success will be grounded on the same core themes that have been fundamental to our success to date. NECS' key achievements include:

- Achievement of ISO 14001 Environmental Management systems standards and ISO 22301 Business continuity management systems
- Achievement of the Better Health at Work Award for maintaining excellence along with the ambassador award
- Achievement of ISO 27001 the internationally recognised Information Security Standard, for the second time
- Continued increase in uptake of Ultra Low Emission and Electric cars through salary sacrifice schemes
- Our Carbon footprint has reduced by 70% since the baseline of 2017/18
- Paper use has decreased by 40% since 2022 and CO2 emissions from travel continue to decrease compared to our 2017/18 baseline

NECS2028 underpins the NECS Business Strategy, the NECS Estate Strategy and our People Promise.

As part of our strategic objectives, NECS has committed to 'Continue to develop NECS's approach to Corporate Social Responsibility, particularly focusing on what is required to further develop our approach to sustainability and our Carbon Reduction Plan, to achieve Net Zero by 2045'.

NECS2028 embodies who we are as an organisation through our commitment to our planet and communities and as is a key enabler to reducing inequalities, creating jobs and generating wealth for our communities. This strategy will allow us to meet local and national legislation and guidance.

NECS2028, along with other corporate documents will support the organisation in the delivery of our objectives relating to ISO14001 Environmental Management.

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As NECS continues its CSR journey, the organisation recognises the great challenges and opportunities there are ahead. This strategy sets our CSR approach and outlines our key areas of focus.

1.1. Key Areas of Focus

NECS is committed to achieving **'Net Zero' for carbon emissions we can control** (the NHS Carbon Footprint) **by 2040** and to achieving **Net Zero for carbon emissions we can influence (NET Zero Footprint Plus) by 2045**.

NECS has identified five areas of focus:

- a) **Carbon Reduction (including travel and transport, estates and facilities)**
- b) **Digital Transformation**
- c) **Social value, supply chain and procurement**
- d) **Workforce and leadership**
- e) **Adaptation**

Our key areas of focus are outlined in further detail at Appendix 1. Each area of focus has identified leads from the CSR workstream groups.

2. National Policy

In October 2021, the UK government published their 'Greening Government Commitments 2021 – 2025 policy', which set out the actions UK government departments and their agencies will take to reduce their impacts on the environment in the period 2021 to 2025.

The UK government policy set out targets for UK government departments and their agencies to:

- Reduce water consumption
- Reduce their greenhouse gas emissions
- Minimise waste and promote resource efficiency

The UK government also set out commitments for departments to:

- Improve sustainable procurement
- Develop and deliver Nature Recovery Plans
- Develop and deliver Climate Change Adaptation Strategies
- Reduce environmental impacts from ICT and digital services

In late 2020, the Greener NHS Programme launched the "Delivering a 'Net Zero' National Health Service" report, which:

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- set out the considerable advances that the NHS has already made in improving the NHS carbon footprint and reducing the environmental impact of NHS services
- provides a clear plan with credible milestones to get to net-zero
- The report also identified proposed targets for the NHS to decarbonise and reduce their carbon emissions:
 - For the emissions we control directly (the NHS Carbon Footprint), we will reach net zero by 2040, with an ambition to reach an 80% reduction by 2028 to 2032;
 - For the emissions we can influence (our NHS Carbon Footprint Plus), we will reach net zero by 2045, with an ambition to reach an 80% reduction by 2036 to 2039

In 2022, the NHS became the first health system to embed Net Zero in legislation through the Health and Social Care Act 2022.

The NHS 2040 net zero target places the NHS at the forefront of decarbonising healthcare, making it the world's first national health system to commit to become 'carbon net zero', backed by clear deliverables and milestones.

The Delivering a 'Net Zero' National Health Service" report identified the full scope of emissions from the NHS (figure 1).

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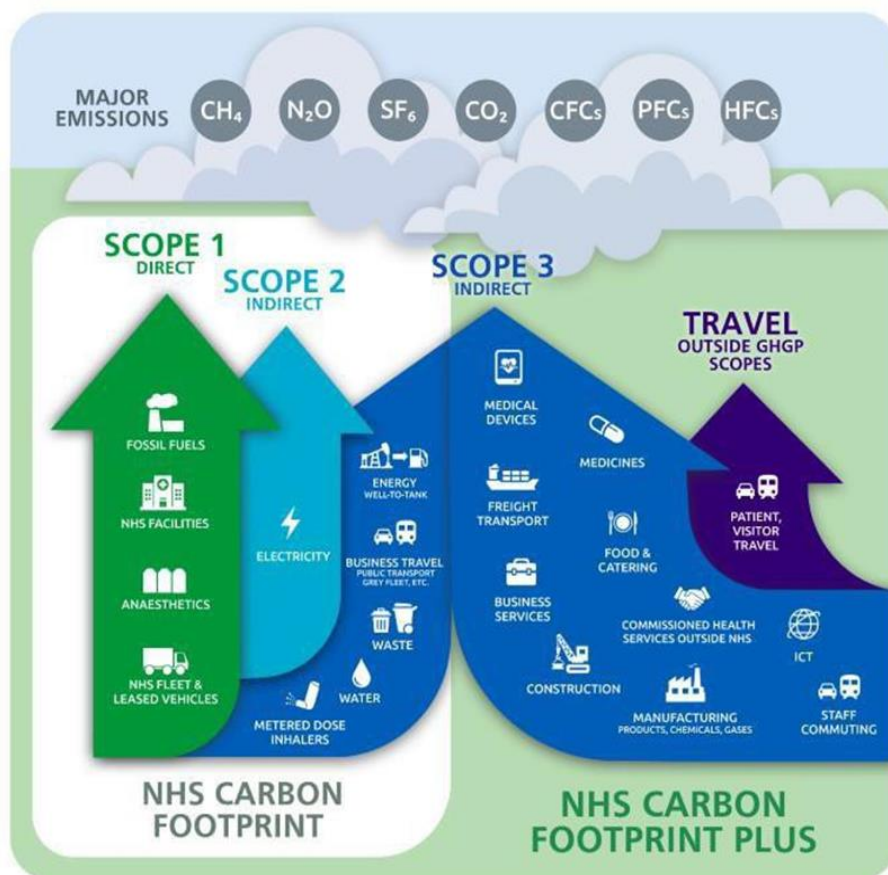


Figure 1: GHGP scopes in the context of the NHS

2.1. NHS England Green Plan

NHS England (NHSE) is an Arm's Length Body (ALB) to the Department of Health and Social Care, and as such are in scope for the Greening Government Commitments 2021 – 2025 policy.

In 2022, NHSE published their joint Green Plan, in response to the 'Greening Government Commitments' and the Greener NHS Programme 'Delivering a 'Net Zero' National Health Service'.

NHSE's Green Plan has a clear vision and set of ambitions (figure 2). NHSE's Green Plan outlines key areas of focus including:

- Workforce and leadership
- Digital Transformation
- Travel and Transport
- Estates and Facilities
- Supply chain and procurement
- Adaptation

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Vision

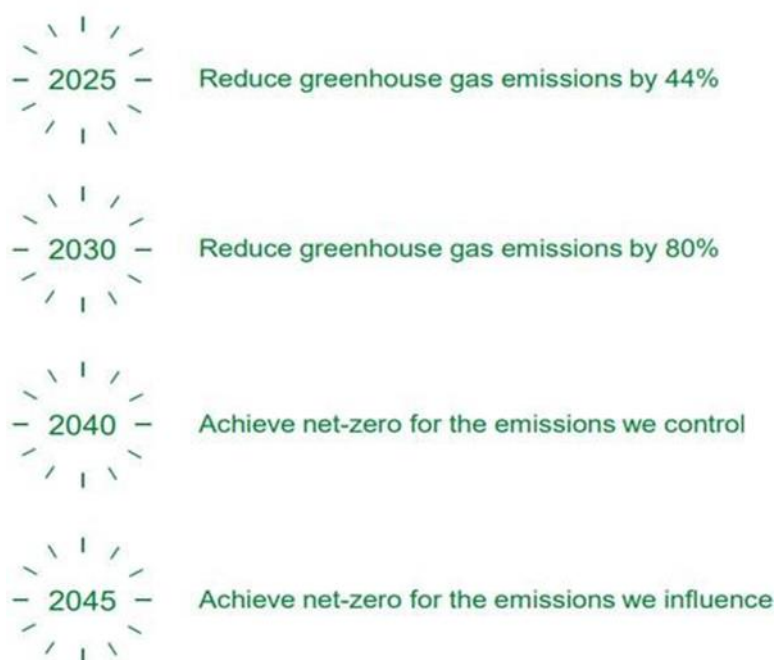


Figure 2: NHSE Green Plan Vision

In 2025 NHSE published updated guidance setting out key actions to be taken to deliver emissions reduction and support resilience to climate impacts.

NECS is working towards NHSE's vision and is a member of a CSU sustainability network, established by NHSE to share sustainability and carbon reduction best practice and learning.

3. Sustainable Business

Business sustainability is often defined as managing the triple bottom line - a process by which organisations manage their financial, social and environmental risks, obligations and opportunities. These three impacts are often referred to as the triple bottom line - **'People, Planet & Place'**.

NECS is committed to being a sustainable business as outlined in our business plan, making best use of resources and maximising our positive impact, now and for future generations across our business footprint.

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NECS continues to work with our existing and new customers and supply chains on the areas we can influence or directly deliver a sustainable and positive impact, and we will be accountable for the difference we make.

NECS2028 informs how we continue to deliver and expand our quality products and services, drive improvement and cost efficiencies, and address the challenges facing our customers and local communities.

4. NECS2028 Governance

We have established three CSR workstreams, corporate, digital and social value and supply chain, comprised of NECS representatives from Estates, IT, Governance, Workforce/People, Communications and Procurement.

NECS have established board level responsibility for CSR with Claire Lake, NECS Organisational Development & Corporate Services Director appointed as the executive lead. The workstreams are accountable for the effective delivery of the NECS 2028 CSR strategy, areas of focus deliverables and the Carbon reduction plan. Assurance of the delivery of NECS 2028 CSR Strategy will be overseen by the NECS Integrated Resilience Safety and Sustainability Committee.

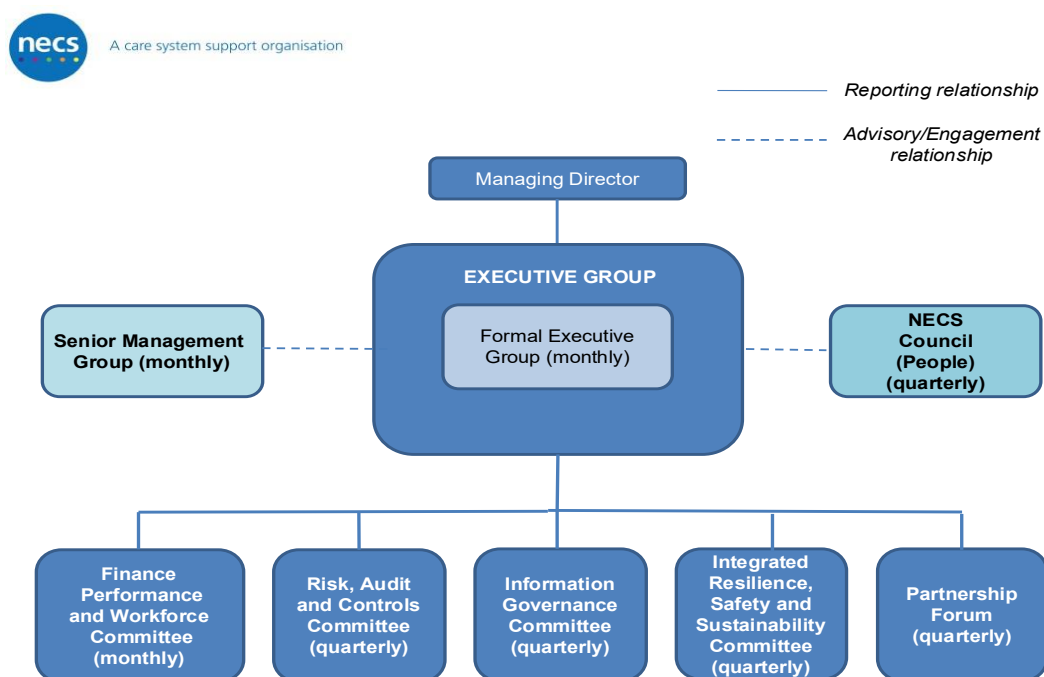


Figure 3: NECS Governance Arrangements

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5. Measuring and Reporting

NECS has a good record of delivering continuous improvements and is committed to improving how we measure our carbon emissions and key areas of focus. NECS 2028 will build upon our existing reporting methodologies and tools, using identified key metrics and reporting routes into IRSS Committee and also escalation to NECS Executive Team. NECS will continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders and peers to broaden the scope of current reporting.

The delivery and outcomes of this strategy will be reported to the IRSS Committee, in line with the annual work programmes.

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Appendix 1: NECS2028 Areas of Focus

Carbon Reduction

Drivers for change/Areas of focus:

NECS is committed to achieving 'Net Zero' for carbon emissions we can control (the NHS Carbon Footprint) by 2040 and is committed to achieving Net Zero for carbon emissions we can influence (NET Zero Footprint Plus) by 2045.

Priorities:

Estates & Facilities

- Continue to replace lighting to LED as and when bulbs stop working to achieve 100% usage by 2040.
- Continue to Use a re-use platform to offer all other furniture, fixings, and stationery to other organisations.
- Design and implement a plan as part of NECS estate strategy to reduce size of the estate and associated carbon footprint
- Review stationary and single use plastics use to identify efficiencies
- Reduce number of available printers across NECS estate to support Paper use reduction and increase digitisation.
- Increase awareness and communication of utilities usage providing tips for reducing consumption
- Quantify emissions associated with homeworking to identify environmental impacts and inform further initiatives
- Work with landlords to Implement Food waste strategies in line with national guidance

Travel & Transport

- Regularly report on emissions from business travel
- Promote use of ULEV/BEV from Salary sacrifice schemes to facilitate the move to fully electric for all new leases
- Support and promote sustainable travel and low carbon options for travel for staff to reduce CO2 emissions and improve health and wellbeing
- Have a Flexible Working policy in place to help staff choose sustainable modes of commuter travel.
- 100% of NECS van fleet to be fully zero emission at the tailpipe by 31/12/2027 (Greening Government Commitment).

Digital Transformation

Drivers for Change

NECS will continue our contribution to the NHS journey towards Net Zero in the digital transformation space. Our developing CSU wide technology strategy will support the transformation of digital services and prioritise sustainability.

Priorities

- Look towards publishing a baseline with the aim to reduce the ICT carbon and ecological footprint.
- Build into contract specifications or equivalent the requirement for low emission equipment wherever possible.
- Map and monitor the supply chain data for the utilization of key ICT systems and services.
- Include CSR objectives/training requirements into appropriate ICT staff appraisals/PDPs.
- Provide input into the CSU wide technology Strategy and link transformation projects with Continuous Improvement (CI) initiatives.
- Publish an accurate ICT footprint based on the services consumed, on estates and with suppliers, encompassing embodied/
- Reuse any approved ICT equipment that is suitable.
- Review the approach to disposal of IT equipment both from commercial and organisational perspectives relating to sustainability.
- Develop and implement a plan to reduce ICT hosting and device emissions from a new 25/26 baseline position

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Social Value Supply chain and Procurement

Drivers for Change

At NECS our social purpose is: To make life changing improvements - creating jobs and generating wealth for our communities

Social Value gives a framework for all partners to design a health and care system that actively and systematically adds social value to the local communities they serve, the care they commission and the products they procure. This means ensuring core activities have a positive effect on peoples' lives and maximise investments.

NECS contract with Shared Business Services (SBS) to procure goods. Our direct impact on supply chain is tied in with the contracts that are in place currently, and to the opportunities we have to engage with local suppliers within the communities in which we operate for best value contracts. SBS are committed to working with us to ensure that the requirements of the 2012 Social Value Act are integrated into all appropriate procurements conducted on our behalf and that we promote ethical purchasing.

We will work with SBS to build suitable evaluation methodologies to allow assessment of all appropriate tenders on how the delivery of the required services, good or works will improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area in which they are performed.

The government aims through its **Prompt Payment Guidance for government buyers** to pay 90% of undisputed and valid invoices from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within 5 days. Additionally, 100% of all undisputed and valid invoices should be paid within 30 days.

Public sector buyers must incorporate 30-day payment terms in new public sector contracts. Additionally, they must ensure that this payment term is passed down their supply chain.

Priorities:

- Ensure compliance with government prompt payment policy in all procurements
- Ensure social value and the importance of maximising public benefit through procurements is captured in

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tender documentations

- Ensure consideration of small to medium size organisations in procurements through details of how they can tender for NHS contracts
- Promote the use of Ecosia search engine and Kiva
- Ensure that procurement team members have been members of The Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply
- Raise awareness of social value and how to demonstrate this within service line offers
- By 31/3/26 develop a plan to increase our proportion of sustainable procurement by 2030
- By 31 March 2026, all organisations will comply with the new minimum Government Buying Standards
- From 1 April 2026, all new highest-tier contracts will enact appropriate and proportionate sustainability measures, and all existing ones will do so by March 2030
- From 1 April 2027, all new second-tier contracts will enact appropriate and proportionate sustainability measures, and all existing ones will do so by March 2030

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Workforce and Leadership

Drivers for Change

Our business plan articulates that our workforce is at the heart of our organisation. Through our People Promise and our People Strategy, we will work to develop an agile, diverse, capable and sustainable workforce. Prioritising developing talent, supporting wellbeing and making our organisation a great place in which to work.

Priorities

- Continue to support Net Zero through maintenance of a board level lead for Net Zero and the broader Greener NHS Agenda
- Support the continued improvement of the health and wellbeing our NECS staff through delivery of our people promise and health and wellbeing initiatives
- Support our staff to undertake volunteering opportunities within their local communities
- Develop and implement a communications plan to provide key messages around carbon reduction and wider CSR initiatives
- Statement relating to sustainability to be added to NECS welcome pack
- Review and refresh NECS staff charity
- Promote access to education opportunities for staff relating to Green plans and sustainability
- Collaborate with CSU family to share best practice and increase involvement with CSR networks
- Raise awareness of greener medication use through staff communication channels
- Deliver a discussion session with senior managers on social value and how to demonstrate this within service offers

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Adaptation

Drivers for Change

Climate change threatens the ability of the NHS to deliver its essential services in both the near and longer term. Resilience and adaptation should be built into business continuity and longer-term planning to avoid climate-related service disruptions.

Priorities

- Ensure staff have the necessary resources and knowledge to maintain business continuity in the face of climate change
- Maintain and uphold standards relating to our ISO 14001 Environmental management system accreditation

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Appendix 2 - Equality impact assessment

Initial screening assessment (Step 1)

As a public body organisation we need to ensure that all our current and proposed strategies, policies, services and functions, have given proper consideration to equality, diversity and inclusion, do not aid barriers to access or generate discrimination against any protected groups under the Equality Act 2010 (Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion/Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Marriage and Civil Partnership).

This screening determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, projects, service reviews and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- The relevance of proposals and decisions to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.
- Whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered for due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).
- Whether or not it is necessary to carry out a full Equality Impact Assessment.

Name(s) and role(s) of person completing this assessment:

Name: Helen Fish

Job Title: Programme Director.

Organisation: NECS

Title of the service/project or policy: NECS2028 Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy

Is this a;

Strategy / Policy ☒ **Service Review** ☐ **Project** ☐

Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

What are the aim(s) and objectives of the service, project or policy:

The aim of this strategy is to outline the commitment, approach and areas of focus that will be taken in order to deliver our corporate social responsibility in line with our social purpose and values whilst also delivering on our carbon reduction plans to achieve Net Zero by 2045.

Who will the project/service /policy / decision impact?

(Consider the actual and potential impact)

- **Staff** ☒
- **Service User / Patients** ☒
- **Other Public Sector Organisations** ☒
- **Voluntary / Community groups / Trade Unions** ☒
- **Others, please specify** [Click here to enter text.](#)

Questions	Yes	No
Could there be an existing or potential negative impact on any of the protected characteristic groups?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has there been or likely to be any staff/patient/public concerns?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Could this piece of work affect how our services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Could this piece of work affect the workforce or employment practices?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the piece of work involve or have a negative impact on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment • Advancing quality of opportunity • Fostering good relations between protected and non-protected groups in either the workforce or community 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you have answered no to the above and conclude that there will not be a detrimental impact on any equality group caused by the proposed policy/project/service change, please state how you have reached that conclusion below:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

If you have answered yes to any of the above, please now complete the

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‘STEP 2 Equality Impact Assessment’ document

Accessible Information Standard	Yes	No
Please acknowledge you have considered the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard when communicating with staff and patients. https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/accessible-info-standard-overview-2017-18.pdf	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If any of the above have not been implemented, please state the reason: Click here to enter text.		

Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening		
Name	Job title	Date
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) has been given.

If you are not completing ‘STEP 2 - Equality Impact Assessment’ this screening document will need to be approved and published alongside your documentation.

Please send a copy of this screening documentation to:
NECSU.Equality@nhs.net **for audit purposes.**

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Appendix 3 - Version control tracker/change log

Guidance on version control is set out in appendix B of NECS information labelling and classification procedure, which can be found on NECSUS.

Version number	Date	Author title	Status	Section/page overview	Changes
1.0	17/04/25	Helen Fish	Draft Pending approval	See summary of changes document	Refreshed strategy to reflect progress to date and updated NHSE Green plan guidance 2025

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