

NHS Orkney – Draft Equality Outcomes 2026–2029

We want your feedback.

NHS Orkney is sharing our **draft Equality Outcomes for 2026–2029** and we want to hear your views. These outcomes set out what we aim to improve for our patients, our workforce and our communities over the next three years.

We are specifically asking for comments on:

- the **three proposed Equality Outcomes**, and
- the **deliverables** (the actions we plan to take to achieve them).

Your feedback will help us ensure these commitments reflect the needs, experiences and priorities of people across Orkney.

Please send your comments to: ORK.feedback@nhs.scot

1. Introduction

Every four years, NHS Orkney must publish new Equality Outcomes under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland). These outcomes help us fulfil our duties to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between people.

Our draft outcomes for 2026–2029 draw on:

- progress and challenges from the past reporting cycle (2021–2025),
- what we know about health and workforce inequalities in Orkney, and
- our organisational priorities and capacity.

We aim for commitments that are ambitious but deliverable, realistic for an island health board, and aligned with our Corporate Strategy 2024–28.

2. Background and Context

Legislative Framework

The outcomes are based on:

- The Equality Act 2010 – Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012

Strategic Alignment

Our Equality Outcomes support NHS Orkney's strategic priorities, including:

- Patient Safety, Quality and Experience
- People
- Performance
- Potential
- Place

Organisational Reality

NHS Orkney has limited specialist Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) capacity. This means equality must be mainstreamed across the organisation, with clear expectations, realistic commitments and shared responsibility.

3. Progress Since 2021

What has gone well

- Continued delivery of EDI-related training.
- Annual workforce monitoring on key characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, sex, disability, age).
- Improvements in some data completeness (notably disability and sexual orientation).
- Better equal pay reporting and occupational segregation analysis.

What we need to improve

- Some equality outcomes have remained unchanged since 2017.
 - Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) must be used more consistently and meaningfully—not as a “tick-box” exercise.
 - Stronger performance management and clearer ownership are required.
 - Leadership behaviours and organisational culture need continued focus.
 - Better measures are needed to track progress.
 - Governance arrangements require strengthening.
 - Line managers need clearer tools and guidance.
 - Data quality must improve, particularly ethnicity and disability declarations.
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4. Evidence Base for the New Outcomes

Workforce Inequalities

Key challenges include:

- A predominantly White workforce reflecting local demographics, limiting lived experience of racial diversity and organisational confidence on anti-racism.
- Low disability declaration rates, restricting understanding of staff needs.
- An ageing workforce, affecting sustainability and recruitment.
- Ongoing issues around speaking up, inclusion and staff experience.

Patient and Population Inequalities

Key themes include:

- Orkney’s ageing population.
 - Barriers linked to island geography—travel, access to specialists and rural isolation.
 - Limited consultation in the previous cycle, highlighting the need for stronger engagement with patients and communities.
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5. Proposed Equality Outcomes for 2026–2029

Below are the three draft outcomes and their associated deliverables.

Outcome 1: NHS Orkney becomes a more inclusive, safe, and respectful workplace for all colleagues and patients, advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

- **Deliverables**
 - Improve the quality and completeness of workforce EDI data through a joint campaign with trade unions.
 - Reduce incidents related to harassment or discrimination.
 - Increase participation in EDI training (including anti-racism and cultural humility).
 - Establish a staff network.
 - Provide Mentally Healthy Workplaces training locally.
 - Apply Living Wage considerations to regulated procurement.
 - Contribute NHS Orkney data to local gender pay gap research.
 - Strengthen use of the NHS Orkney behavioural framework and values, with improvements in iMatter results.
 - Improve staff survey results on bullying, speaking up and team working.
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Outcome 2: Improved health outcomes and access for groups experiencing disadvantage in Orkney’s island setting.

- **Deliverables**
 - Make better use of existing engagement channels with communities.
 - Improve access indicators (waiting times, screening uptake, digital access, complaints).

- Carry out equality impact assessments for Type 2 Diabetes and cardiovascular disease services.
 - Develop frailty prevention activities that consider the needs of ferry-linked isles.
 - Establish consistent follow-up processes for non-attenders with learning disabilities or autism in Primary Care.
 - Embed reasonable adjustments across all Orkney screening services.
 - Explore barriers and facilitators to breast screening uptake among eligible women in Orkney.
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Outcome 3: NHS Orkney continues to make progress in becoming an anti-discrimination organisation.

- **Deliverables**

- Deliver anti-racism education for staff and leaders.
- Publish NHS Orkney's anti-racism commitments.
- Improve race-related staff experience reporting.
- Provide sexual harassment in the workplace training.
- Embed anti-racism planning in the Annual Delivery Plan cycle.
- Deliver the National Framework for Spiritual Care.
- Review and strengthen the EQIA process, including monitoring of key actions.