



**Provision of Autism Strategy Evaluation
A Proposal
for
Scottish Government**

July 2020



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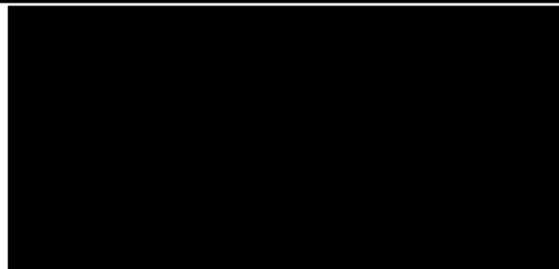
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Mandatory questions

Relating to criminal convictions

Question		Answer
1	Has the bidder itself or any person who is a member of its administrative, management or supervisory body or has powers of representation, decision or control therein been the subject of a conviction by final judgment within the last five years for one of the reasons (1-8) listed above?	No
2	If the answer is yes to any, please provide details including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of conviction • Which of the points 1-8 it relates to and the reason • Name of the person convicted • A description of any measures taken by the bidder to demonstrate its reliability despite the existence of this relevant ground for exclusion 	n/a

Relating to the levels of insurance cover

Question	Answer
1 The Bidder confirms they already have or can commit to obtain, prior to the commencement of the contract, the levels of insurance cover indicated at Schedule 8 (Terms and Conditions), section 14.3 (as a minimum)	Yes, I already have this
2 Provide details of the coverage you refer to in Q1 (above) here:	

1 Understanding the requirement

Question 1.1: Requirements of the evaluation

Background

The first Scottish Strategy for Autism was published in 2011 and has since been refreshed and updated, first in 2014 and again in 2018. The 2011 strategy set out 26 recommendations and the two later iterations reframed the strategy into an outcomes-based approach. For the period 2018 to 2021, it is structured around a refreshed Outcomes and Priorities Framework.

The Scottish Government is seeking to appoint external, objective evaluators to assess the progress of this strategic approach to improving the lives of autistic people, their families and carers. Whilst a great deal has changed since 2011 and neurodiversity is now much more visible on the policy agenda across organisations, including amongst some employers, the journey is by no means over. An example of this is the recent announcement by Skills Development Scotland of the Neurodiversity Skills Fund aimed at supporting training for neurodivergent people with a focus on cyber security.

The progress made by the autism strategy has been monitored at regular points, in 2014 and again in 2017 when the Outcomes and Priorities Framework was updated following a consultation exercise. The refreshed strategy document was published in 2018 and commits to publishing a report on progress towards the priorities in 2020¹. It is this research that the Scottish Government is now commissioning.

Why it is important

This is a very important evaluation that has the potential to have a lasting impact on the lives of autistic people in Scotland as well as their parents, carers and society as a whole. There is increasing recognition of the value of diversity, for example diversity in the workforce, diversity in arts and culture, diversity in education, and diversity in the community. It is also central to Inclusive Growth and the Fair Work agenda².

Autistic people make up 1.04% of Scotland's population, meaning that over 47,000 autistic people live here³, accounting for around one in 97. However this level of diagnosis is below the global level which is around one in 68 *young people* (1.47%) and there is undoubtedly a sizeable cohort of people in Scotland who are 'undiagnosed'. It is generally accepted that the gender ratio for autism diagnosis is 4:1 male-to-female, although recent research suggests there may be more undiagnosed women than men, with these more recent estimates suggesting that although the prevalence among males is higher, the ratio is more likely to be in the region of 2.5:1⁴.

For the almost 50,000 people affected by autism in Scotland there are implications in terms of education, employment, social opportunities and access to services. It also impacts on their families, carers and friends, demonstrating how important it is to ensure that there is the right policy response that is focused on improving the lives of autistic people along with their families and carers.

Thinking about the way that autism can affect people, some adults with autism can find it more difficult to do some of the day-to-day things that others may take for granted. For example, they may find it difficult to:

- transition from school to college or university

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-strategy-autism-outcomes-priorities-2018-2021/>

² <https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/>

³ The microsegmentation of the autism spectrum: research project – Scottish Government (2018)

⁴ Meaningful employment of autistic people – Unlimited Potential (2019)

- access and progress through education
- find and sustain employment
- manage their finances
- sustain a tenancy and run a home
- plan meals and maintain a balanced and healthy and diet
- access and enjoy leisure and recreational opportunities including sport
- travel safely and independently
- access social security and other support and services
- establish and maintain a friendship or a relationship
- navigate social situations and cultures in education, work and social settings

Children and young people can find it difficult to fulfill and demonstrate their potential in education and learning and to access the next level, such as college or university. This is because the way education is delivered and achievement assessed may act as barriers. There is a current issue about how to support autistic people to transition back into education and other aspects of life following the Covid-19 lockdown.

Autistic people, including children, are more likely to have high levels of anxiety and depression. They can also find the transition from children to adult services difficult and the process is not always smooth or timely.

As a result of some of these points, autistic people can face exclusion, prejudice and bullying. It may sometime be unconscious bias but, nevertheless, the impacts are the same.

Relatives and carers of children and adults with autism can also face difficulties and stresses. They may feel worried about the autistic person and if they have significant care needs, that can be exhausting. It can also be frustrating and dispiriting if they have to deal with other people's attitudes, prejudice and ignorance. They may find it difficult to access the information and support they need and that they want for the autistic person. They are likely to feel frustrated by the poor quality of some services and the processes and timescales for accessing them. Society also stands to benefit if we can ensure more diversity across every aspect of life, in education, in the workforce, in leisure and recreation and in social and community settings.

Overarching all of this, it is vital and only right that autistic people are able to exercise appropriate choice and control over their lives. They must have an effective voice and be able to actively participate in society. They must be allowed and enabled to set their sights high and be ambitious and as independent as they wish and can be. In every aspect of their lives, including engagement with services, employers, education, and health, there must be an asset-based approach to assessing what they *can* do and *can* achieve.

All of this illustrates why it is so important to continue to take a collaborative and strategic approach to assess the priorities and design interventions and responses that will build on the achievements to date, and continue to improve the lives and outcomes for autistic people, ensuring that they can contribute and fulfil their potential.

Capturing progress and informing the future

The strategy has been refreshed and reframed and in this evaluation ekosgen will assess the progress and impacts of the entire lifetime, from the original strategy through to the subsequent refreshed strategies. ekosgen will therefore examine the full life of the strategy and develop the evidence base on the outcomes and priorities that have been achieved since 2011. Part of this will be examining how

the refreshed outcomes have been developed and arrived at, the efficacy of each iteration of the strategy, and demonstrating the extent to which this proactive review at regular points has contributed to, or indeed hindered, progress.

The Strategic Outcomes for 2018-2021 cover: A Healthy Life; Choice and Control; Independence; and Active Citizenship, and we discuss this in more detail in Section 2. In our experience of assessing strategies that have developed over time, it can be most effective to start with the most recent one and work backwards, to identify the more recent achievements and trace them back to the starting point. This will allow us to develop a clear understanding of how changes in the early years of the strategy have built and led to changes and progress over time. It reflects the theory of change model that is very effective at assessing impacts and what has led to them. We took a similar approach to assessing the impacts of Scotland's tourism strategy (Tourism Scotland 2020) covering 2012-2020 and Dundee City Council's strategy to deliver culture-led regeneration over a 20 year period.

Evaluating the strategy will comprise considering and answering the following research questions, which we have developed from the questions set out in the brief. We have expanded these slightly which we believe will add extra learning and value.

- Has it done what it said it would do? How many of the strategies, recommendations and priorities have been delivered, and has anything been delivered that was unintended and additional? If anything has not been delivered, what are the reasons for this and plans for the future?
- What have been the impacts and changes on the quality of services and service offer from providers, in particular local authorities and voluntary sector organisations? We will confirm with the Scottish Government the extent to which the evaluation can and should explore impact on the quality of NHS services e.g. mental health services and the diagnostic pathway.
- What have been the benefits for autistic people, their families and carers? What differences has the strategy made?
- Lessons learnt about the delivery of the strategy's recommendations and the impacts achieved. What has worked well, and why? What has been less successful, and why?

In the evaluation, we will take account of the wider policy context so we can provide a credible assessment of the impact of the strategy, and the extent to which changes can be attributed to it along with any other external contributing factors. In Scotland, as with other parts of the UK and internationally, there is a range of organisations and specialists with a spectrum of views, for example around interventions e.g. behavioural, educational, social and biochemical approaches. The evaluation must understand and take cognisance of these different views and how they may impact on the evidence gathered through primary research. This will be key to our approach to the research design and analysis discussed in Chapter 2.

If appointed, we will provide the Scottish Government with a comprehensive and robust evaluation that will deliver learning and key messages that will allow the Government and partners to confidently plan for the period beyond 2021. It will not simply trace progress, we will drill into the outcomes and impacts and how the various interventions and activities have led to them.

Buy in and ownership

The evaluation must be objective and credible, and the recommendations and future strategy that may flow from it must have buy-in from stakeholders, including and arguably most importantly, amongst autistic people, their families and carers, and the experts and specialist organisations that deliver services, support autistic people and undertake research. ekosgen will achieve this by taking an inclusive approach to the research, ensuring that our research reaches deeply and broadly in the various stakeholder groups. Our workshops will be structured to be fully participatory, our research with autistic people will be accessible, and our consultations with policy professionals, autism experts and organisations will cover the breadth of activities, viewpoints and organisation objectives.

We will bring a fresh and objective eye to the evaluation. We are not affiliated with any organisation with an interest in the strategy and are completely independent. Our team for this evaluation includes a member with an autism diagnosis and ekosgen as an employer has and continues to make any necessary adjustments, although these have been minor. Another member of the team has an 18 year old son with ADHD and dyslexia and whilst these conditions are not the same as autism, she brings valuable personal experience and understanding of neurodiversity and the challenges that can be presented. Importantly, the team has a very good understanding and proven track record of carrying out research with neurodivergent people and with the services that support them. We are known to many of the organisations and policy professionals and have a reputation for impartiality and integrity.

2 Method and added value

Question 2.1: Understanding of policy environment

Equalities and diversity is a key workstream for ekosgen and we have a very good understanding of the autism policy environment. We know that autism is a key policy area for the Scottish Government as part of the overall neurodiversity agenda.

Recently we undertook research for Skills Development Scotland to develop an evidence base of neurodiversity in digital tech education and employment. As a result of that work, SDS has launched the Neurodiversity Skills Fund which will provide training for neurodivergent people with a focus on cybersecurity. We also recently designed and facilitated a workshop to develop a Neurodiversity Action Plan. Many of the key players in autism in Scotland participated.

Encouragingly, over the last decade in Scotland there has been an increasing strategic policy focus on the needs of autistic people across all aspects of life. It is important to understand the evolution of this as context. The starting point was work carried out by the Scottish Government in 2000⁵ which highlighted issues of a lack of knowledge among professionals about the autism spectrum; a shortage of services for adults; and the potential unsuitability of services designed to support individuals. In 2001 The Public Health Institute Scotland published the Assessment of Autistic Spectrum Disorders⁶ which aimed to provide the most accurate picture of the level of service provision for ASD along with guidance on how existing services might be improved. This resulted in 32 recommendations and the formation of an autism reference group led by Scottish Government with a specific focus on diagnosis, training and information.

In 2004, in response to the identified lack of training among professionals mentioned previously, the National Training Framework for Autism Spectrum Disorders was produced. It was designed for any professional involved in the care, support or education of people on the spectrum.

In 2007 the national focus on the autism spectrum continued with the publication of guidance on assessment, diagnosis and intervention for individuals on the spectrum up to 18 years of age and in 2008 policy guidance for commissioners of services was developed to identify specific areas commissioners should embed in commissioning services for adults on the spectrum.

The Scottish Strategy for Autism published in 2011⁷ states that its vision is:

“individuals on the autism spectrum are respected, accepted and valued by their communities and have confidence in services to treat them fairly so that they are able to have meaningful and satisfying lives”.

The strategy sets out priorities to improve outcomes for autistic people living in Scotland. It provides short-term (two year) goals which includes ensuring appropriate access to necessary mainstream services and removal of short-term barriers such as unaddressed diagnoses. It also sets out holistic personalised (ten year) goals which include creating meaningful partnerships between central and local government and the independent sector, and accessing consistent levels of appropriate support across an individual's lifespan. It recognises that some autistic people also have learning disabilities, mental health issues or other conditions, meaning people need different levels and types of support⁸.

⁵ <https://www2.gov.scot/resource/doc/1095/0001661.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.scottishautism.org/about-autism/strategy-policy-initiatives/autism-policy/autistic-spectrum-disorders-needs-assessment>

⁷ The Scottish Strategy for Autism – Scottish Government (2011)

⁸ National Autistic Society <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/asd.aspx>

An updated Outcomes and Priorities document⁹ relating to the autism strategy was published covering the 2018-2021 period. As touched on in the previous chapter, the document sets out the following strategic outcomes for the final period of the autism strategy:

- **A healthy life** – autistic people enjoy the highest attainable standard of living, health and family life and have timely access to diagnostic assessment and integrated support services.
- **Choice and control** – autistic people are treated with dignity and respect and services are able to identify their needs and are responsive to meet those needs.
- **Independence** – autistic people are able to live independently in the community with equal access to all aspects of society.
- **Active citizenship** – autistic people are able to participate in all aspects of community and society by successfully transitioning from school into meaningful educational or employment opportunities.

In 2019 the Scottish Government announced new steps to increase support for people with autism and improve public understanding of the condition. This included the creation of a National Autism Implementation Team to work across children and adult services to improve the diagnosis process and care pathway for autism and other conditions, such as ADHD. It covered an awareness campaign to improve public perception to see autism as a different way of thinking - rather than a disorder that can be cured and to highlight the strengths people with autism can bring to society. Lastly, the announcement committed to improve the support given to newly diagnosed autistic people and their families, a refresh of the autism resource available to schools. The Minister for Mental Health Clare Haughey said:

“We want Scotland to be an inclusive society in which everyone can play a full role and we are absolutely committed to changing attitudes and to showing the positive contributions that people with autism can make. These next steps will build on the work and progress we have made since the Scottish Government published the first Scottish Strategy for Autism in 2011. We want everyone to receive the support they need to reach their full potential, in the most suitable environment with a range of provisions in place to ensure this is the case.”

The Scottish Government’s Programme for Government 2019-20 built on the commitments of the previous year to improve mental health services for children, young people and adults. It states the Government’s intention to establish a 24/7 crisis support service for children, young people and their families and a community wellbeing service that allows for self-referral for children and young people.

The Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027¹⁰ sets a vision for Scotland that applies to everyone in the population. Its themes of parity of esteem, improved early intervention, access, physical health improvement and rights and recovery apply regardless of diagnosis. People with autism have higher incidence of co-occurrence of anxiety, depression and other mental disorders and in recognition, there is a specific action in the strategy that commits to a review of how the provisions in the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 fulfil the needs of people with learning disability and autism. We understand that this review is underway.

Recognising the importance of education and the difficulties that autistic people can face in the education system, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) conducted a review of provision for pupils on the spectrum and it was augmented by the National Autistic Society’s ‘Make School Make Sense’ report. Flowing from this, the Autism Education Working group was formed and the outcome was The Autism Toolbox¹¹. This is a free online resource to support the inclusion of autistic learners in early learning, primary and secondary school settings.

⁹ Scottish Strategy for Autism: Outcomes and Priorities – Scottish Government (2018)

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/mental-health-strategy-2017-2027/>

¹¹ <http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/>

The Scottish Governments learning disability strategy is called The Keys to Life¹² and in its implementation framework and priorities for 2019-2021, it states its visions that people with learning disabilities are empowered to: live healthy and active lives; learn to reach their potential; participate in an inclusive economy; and contribute to an equal and safe Scotland. What is implicit in this is that Scotland must capture the value of people with learning disabilities and that we, as a country stand to gain. This demonstrates how far the policy environment has come – recognising people with learning disabilities as assets.

Against this policy backdrop, and along with what the strategy has achieved, there are encouraging pockets of activity. For example Glasgow is aiming to become an Autism Aware City. This has involved the training of service staff, encouraging businesses to introduce quiet hours and spaces and developing an interactive map to help autistic people and their families plan trips¹³. The online interactive map is part of Glasgow's Autism Friendly City Centre initiative and shows what services and assistance are available to autistic people in the city centre and other key areas around Glasgow¹⁴.

Employers such as JP Morgan, Auticon and RBS have specific initiatives to recruit and employ autistic people in Scotland and as mentioned, SDS has launched the Neurodiversity Skills Fund. Public awareness and understanding of autism has increased, and along with other neurodivergent conditions, more people in the public eye are disclosing that they have a condition. And as we prepare this proposal, there is media coverage of the particular needs of autistic people as the country emerges from lockdown and they start back at school, work and daily lives.

Addressing the policy problems

Despite the undoubted progress that has been made, there are still gaps and issues that must continue to be addressed if autistic people are to be able to access the services they need, be fully included, and achieve their potential in all aspects of life. For example in 2016 in the UK only 16% of autistic adults were in full-time employment with a further 16% in part-time roles¹⁵. A survey conducted by the National Autistic Society in 2016 found that, despite the relatively small proportion of autistic people being in full-time employment, over three-quarters of unemployed autistic adults wished to be in work¹⁶. Additionally, four in 10 of those working in part-time roles said they felt underemployed and wanted to work more hours.

At key stages since 2011 the priorities and outcomes have been reviewed and developed which is very positive. We see this evaluation as an opportunity to review the priorities, understand what works well in achieving impacts and so inform the strategic approach to address autism policy problems beyond 2021. We have developed our methods, set out in Section 2.2, with this specifically in mind. Our work will involve extensive consultation with stakeholders, service providers, key informants and autistic people. This will be essential to understand changes and impacts and highlight remaining gaps and issues to set the priorities for the future. Key to this will be getting a clear picture of the current unmet needs and where services are not appropriate, effective or high quality.

Our analysis and reporting will clearly evidence what has worked, what has been less effective, the reasons, and what still needs to be done so refining and articulating the current policy problems. It will look across the entire policy arena, including mental and physical health (including diagnostic), education, skills and training, employment, social inclusion, finance, community participation, access

¹² <https://keystolife.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/the-keys-to-life-full-version.pdf>

¹³ Autism Friendly Strategy – Glasgow City Centre Strategy <https://www.glasgowcitycentrestrategy.com/project/autism-friendly-city-centre>

¹⁴ Autism Awareness Venues – Glasgow City Council <https://glasgowgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=a208113513da4065961c31b41dc095eb>

¹⁵ The Autism Employment Gap – The National Autistic Society (2016) <https://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/media-centre/news/2016-10-27-employment-gap.aspx>

¹⁶ Autistic adults sought for tech jobs in Scotland – BBC News (2019) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-47197918>

to information, leisure and recreation, transport and connectivity (including digital), and criminal justice. Based on this evidence, we will provide recommendations for the future delivery of services to autistic people in Scotland, and key priorities for any next iteration of the strategy.

Question 2.2: Added value

In this section we describe our methodology and demonstrate the added value that our team and our methods will bring to the evaluation. Central to our approach is the ethos of co-production, reflecting the principal of *‘Nothing about us without us’*.

Figure 2.1 summarises our methodology. It sets the methods out in a linear way however some stages will overlap and run consecutively as shown in our proposed workplan and schedule in Chapter 3. The detail of planning and conducting the primary research including the project mobilisation stage, and undertaking the analysis is provided in our response at Section 2.4.

Figure 2.1: Evaluation methods



Stage 1: Inception and project management

This is an important and complex evaluation and so it is important that we have a detailed inception stage and effective project management. The inception meeting is planned for 1st September and ekosgen will provide a draft and then final agenda covering the following areas:

- Background and context:** A discussion around the background to the evaluation including its fit and alignment with other policies, strategies and priorities. This will include a ‘walk through’ the development of the strategy since 2011, the changing context, placing autism and the strategy in the wider context of neurodiversity, and any current thinking on the scope of the strategy beyond 2021.
- Methodology:** Clarification of the detail of the methodology and the approach and protocols to engaging with stakeholders, policy professionals, autism organisations and expert. We will cover the communication and recruitment strategy, GDPR implications, and identify organisations to be consulted with and the policy areas from which the professionals will be drawn. ekosgen will bring an initial list to the meeting as a starting point for confirming the

consultees. We will also talk about undertaking research with autistic people, our suggested approach and how we will encourage and support engagement.

The second strand of this will be identifying relevant documents and strategies and papers including those that may not be in the public domain. Through our team's extensive work in neurodiversity and equalities, we are familiar with the key sources.

- **Timings and milestones:** The tender specification sets out the key deliverables and milestones which our workplan and project management will ensure that we adhere to. At the inception we will confirm the outputs at each reporting stage and agree dates for future meetings.
- **Study protocols:** This high profile evaluation must be delivered on time and to an exceptional standard and therefore strong project management will be vital. Our response at Section 3.1 sets out our proposed contract management methodology. At inception, we will agree project update processes and how we will highlight and resolve any emerging difficulties quickly. We will of course raise any issue on an as-needs basis between the regular updates. At the meeting we will agree data transfer protocols to ensure security.

Following the inception meeting, ekosgen will prepare a report of the discussion, agreements and actions. This will be accompanied by a detailed workplan and description of the approach, reflecting the points covered at the inception meeting. We have allocated **5.5 days** to the inception, implementation and project management components of the work.

Stage 2: Desk research and analysis

ekosgen will collate and review the background materials and each iteration of the Autism Strategy. We will also identify and gather other materials and documents relevant to the evaluation. This will include outputs, and evidence of outcomes of the strategy for example awareness raising and campaigning activities, resources such as the Autism Toolbox, partnerships, working groups, and where autism is integrated in to other strategies and action plans.

We will review the context and evolution of the strategy since 2011. Our team will draw out each of the outputs and outcomes and organise them chronologically in a table, which will form part of our package of research tools. We will use this to map the extent to which each has been achieved first through desk research and then in consultations. The initial map will be used in the consultations to confirm and develop the evidence of progress. This is a tried and tested method, for example we used it in our assignment to assess progress against the Early Learning and Childcare Action Plan for Skills Development Scotland.

As the work progresses, we will add to the desk research and evidence of progress and achievements. We have allocated **5 days** to this stage.

Stage 3: Project mobilisation

Drawing on the emerging findings of the desk research, our team will develop the foundations to mobilise the primary research comprising designing the research tools and developing the communications plan to raise awareness and recruit research participants.

Research tool design

ekosgen will draft the following research tools:

- A topic guide to use to consult with policy professionals, autism organisations and autism experts. This will be semi-structured so that our consultants can use it flexibly to reflect the particular organisation and role of the consultee.
- A workshop structure for the workshops with service providers. This will be designed to maximise participation and ensure that service providers can fully and meaningfully contribute.

It will comprise a presentation on the research and the objectives followed by facilitated sessions and feedback. In the current circumstance, we anticipate that these will be conducted using Zoom which has the capacity to hold breakout ‘rooms’. We have been successfully using this across a range of projects.

- A questionnaire to be distributed to autistic people to be completed online but with an option for hard copy if preferred. This will be carefully designed and tested to ensure it is suitable and accessible for autistic people, recognising that they are not a homogenous group. In Question 2.4 we discuss how we will encourage and enable informed participation and careful and considered design will be key. The questionnaire will be clear, unambiguous and we will avoid vague quantifiers or questions. It will be written in plain English and an Easy Read version will be available to enhance accessibility.
- An interview topic guide to interview up to 30 autistic people to supplement the survey.

Table 2.1 sets out the lines of enquiry that we will anticipate exploring with the various stakeholders and autistic people. There will be some overlap in topics between the groups and in the consultations with policy professionals, autism organisations and experts, our consultants will prepare by understanding their particular role and area of expertise and use the topic guide flexibly.

Table 2.1: Lines of enquiry

Group	Lines of enquiry
<p>Policy professionals, autism organisations and experts (consultations)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background to the organisation and involvement/interaction with the strategy and its activities. This will include identifying the extent to which they are in a position to discuss the strategy since 2011. • Understanding of the strategy’s objectives and its evolution over time. This will touch on the wider policy context and its alignment with other policies and strategies. • Progress against recommendations and priorities and what has led to or inhibited progress against certain areas • Additional deliverables – how have these come about and added value achieved. • Impacts on services, across the spectrum of types of services and service users, and variations e.g. have the impacts been greater in some types of services, locations, policy areas? We will ask for evidence and illustrative examples. • Views on the sustainability of the impacts and how this can be maximised. • Lessons learnt from the development, implementation, monitoring and regular refreshes of the strategy. • How these lessons should be applied post 2021 including future priorities. • Views on the rationale for a specific strategy for autism going forward. • Impact of, and responses to Covid-19 and the implications for the needs and of autistic people and access to services

Group	Lines of enquiry
<p>Autism service providers (workshops)</p>	<p>In the workshops we will cover similar themes to the consultations but with particular focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements and impacts on the quality and range of services for autistic people and their families and carers. This will cover what is provided, ease of access, how it is provided and collaboration and partnership working to ensure a holistic approach in local areas. • The impacts and benefits for service users, and the extent to which the strategy has contributed along with other factors that may have influenced. This will be structured around the strategic outcomes for 2018-2021 • Strengths of the strategy in terms of improving services, and what could be done differently to maximise this. • Looking to the future: lessons learnt, continuation of the strategy, priorities to improve the lives of autistic people in Scotland.
<p>Autistic people (survey) – in appropriate and accessible format</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background information so we can monitor profile of the respondent cohort. • Services that they use. Any barriers to using services. • Experience of using the services and the extent to which services meet their needs. • What differences do the services make to their lives • Unmet needs, and support that they would like to be able to access. This might cover help to find a job, remain in a job, sustain a tenancy, travel independently, access and remain in education, take part in sport, leisure and culture, get the health care support they need and so forth.

The evaluation covers the period from 2011 to now. Our experience of work covering similarly long timescales shows that it can be difficult for consultees to reflect back to the early years of the strategy. We will therefore structure research, the stakeholder topic guide and the workshops to focus on the most recent delivery period and achievements, and then work backwards to 2011 identify the starting points for these and what has led to these achievements over time.

We will draft these tools and submit them to the Steering Group. Following feedback, we will make any adjustments and move to the testing stage.

Cognitive testing of the survey and topic guide with autistic people

To make sure the survey and interview topic guides are effective in gathering the information required, and that it is accessible, we will undertake cognitive testing. This approach will be particularly valuable for the evaluation as it is so important that the voices of autistic people are heard at every stage.

We will work with intermediary organisations and our own network to establish a panel of 10 ‘testers. We will aim for a range in terms of gender, age, and location. Our team will then undertake rigorous cognitive testing of the survey and topic guide adhering to the Scottish Government Social Research Group Social Science Methods Series relating to cognitive testing in questionnaire design¹⁷. We most recently used cognitive testing in our recent study into neurodiversity in digital technology training and education. In that study, we tested questions, language, options and responses with neurodivergent

¹⁷ <https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/175356/0091403.pdf>

individuals to develop the research tools. The aim is to test and improve the survey and topic guide so that they gather the very highest quality and consistent data and so we will consider:

- **Comprehension:** which is how respondents understand and interpret questions. The aim is to ensure that respondents have a shared, consistent and accurate understanding of the question. We will identify any issues of jargon and terminology, ambiguous concepts, and long and overly complex questions.
- **Retrieval/recall:** which tests how respondents search their memory to retrieve the relevant information to answer the questions. The aim is to ensure that the content is relevant to the target audience, albeit that not all questions will be relevant to every respondent, depending on their particular circumstance and experience.
- **Judgement:** exploring how respondents assess each question and consider and estimate their response to provide an answer. There is an inherent danger with surveys that respondents will be influenced by social desirability or judgement, even in confidential surveys. We must ensure that questions are not biased.
- **Response:** to understand how a respondent provides information in response to a question and confirm that the options provided fit with understanding of the question, the likely answers and judgement. Testing in this way will mitigate the risk of skipping questions, incomplete or inaccurate responses.

We will undertake a mix of concurrent and retrospective cognitive semi-structured depth interviews. Concurrent means that respondents will complete the questionnaire during the interview and we will ask them to think aloud in terms of what the question means, their thought processes the experience respondents draw on and how they decide on their answer. This is very well suited for testing self-completion questionnaires as in this survey and so we will use it with five of the 10 panel of 'testers'. Our interviewers will use probes to follow up on points raised as they are thinking aloud.

We will provide the other five members of the panel with the questionnaire in advance, ask them to complete it and return it to us. We will then speak to them by **video call/telephone** as a retrospective cognitive interview. This will rely more on verbal probing which is particularly useful in uncovering issues around understanding questions and identifying where they may be poorly worded or ambiguous. It is also useful in examining retrieval, judgement and response.

Our verbal probing will be clear, unbiased and consistent across all the interviews – interviewers will be carefully briefed in advanced and provided with questions and probes. We will be flexible and open-minded so that we capture any unanticipated problems.

The findings against each question, from each interview will be recorded and we will use them to make required adjustments. As an extra quality measure we will then send the questionnaire back to five members of the panel and ask them to retest it.

In advance of the testing, we will brief the 10 testers on what they can expect, what questions we will ask them about the questionnaire and guide and their experience of completing it. We will ask them if they have a preference on how we gather the feedback e.g. by phone, video call or in written formats. We will also ask them if they have any specific requirements or preferences including having another person with them to provide support and reassurance. They will be given a named contact in our team along with a photo of the person they will be talking to.

Later in this proposal we set out how we will encourage and support autistic people to participate and maximise accessibility. We are skilled and experienced at engaging a wide range of people in research including those who may find it more challenging, and neurodiverse people. We recognise that change can be particularly difficult for some autistic people and that emerging from lockdown may be daunting. They have and continue to face changes in routine which can be difficult, lockdown and moving out of it has brought a layer of uncertainty which autistic people can find difficult. Added to this,

guidance and rules are changing rapidly and are not always clear which can be particularly stressful and confusing for autistic people. Our team will take account of this during the research and be sensitive and responsive to the needs and concerns of individuals.

Communication plan

Raising awareness about the evaluation will be important to maximise participation and achieve buy-in to the process and the final report and recommendations. Communication will be particularly important in reaching in to the population of autistic people in Scotland and the services they use.

We will prepare a list of relevant organisations that we will contact and ask to promote the survey and other aspects of the research on our behalf, many of these will be consultees and potential workshop participants. Our team will prepare and provide them with content that they can disseminate through their social media and other channels. It will clearly explain the aims of the research, our methods, opportunities and routes to contribute, how the research will be used and the benefits it will deliver to autistic people and organisations and service providers. It will be clear, and appropriate for the range of audiences we are aiming to engage. There will be a named contact in ekosgen for more information. We will ask organisations to push out messages at intervals, for example updates on the number of consultations completed and survey respondents. Promoting the study and the individual strands of work through trusted intermediaries and organisations will ensure that it is seen as credible and 'safe'. It will also mean that the messaging about the study is consistent and reinforced through multiple routes. In Section 2.4 we set out our approach to recruiting study participants which will build on the communication activities we have outlined here.

We have budgeted for **6.5 days** to design and test the research tools including the workshops and the survey and prepare and implement the communication plan.

Stage 4: Primary research with stakeholders and informants

In line with the requirements of the brief, our team will carry out consultations with policy professionals, autism organisations, and autism experts. The brief also indicates the requirement, which we agree with, to carry out research with autistic people.

The brief sets out a list of likely consultees which we agree with. Some are specific organisations, and others, such as CAMHS, will require us to identify the person best placed to input, given that services sit within the 14 territorial NHS Boards. We do not want to simply repeat the list provided here and our team will identify policy professionals and agree these with the Scottish Government client. We anticipate this will include members of the Scottish Government's Autism and Learning Disability team, Education Scotland, and professionals in policy areas such as health and social care, training and education, and employability. Potential organisations include Scottish Offenders with Learning Disabilities Network, Autism Network Scotland, Education Scotland, Health Improvement Scotland, Integration Authorities, COSLA and potentially targeted consultations with local authorities, for example Glasgow City Council¹⁸.

We have budgeted for 20 consultations by phone, Zoom, Teams or Skype, whichever the consultee prefers. These could be individual or in small groups of two or three people. We have increased the number suggested in the brief as we believe it is very important to ensure that the research is inclusive and is seen to be inclusive of the range of organisations, their interests, and strategic and operational roles, area of policy, and geographic coverage. This can be agreed at inception along with the list of potential consultees and refine it as necessary. We have contacts within a number of the organisations and will ask the Scottish Government to provide any additional contacts. We will also discuss GDPR compliance.

¹⁸ GCC is committed to Glasgow becoming an autism friendly city.

In sampling, we will seek to achieve an appropriate spread across policy professionals and organisations with a range of interests and remits for example those that support families of adults with autism (e.g. PASDA), lobbying and campaigning (e.g. ARGH), organisations that provide support to autistic people, and organisations that may focus on a specific area such as education and training, employment (Auticon) and independent living.

ekosgen has budgeted for eight workshops with service providers in eight local authority areas covering rural and urban areas. These will be undertaken by Zoom using Zoom breakout groups which we have been using successfully since March. We anticipate 15-20 participants in each workshop session with two facilitated breakout groups. We will compile a list of potential invitees and understand the types of services they provide, their target beneficiaries (e.g. young autistic people, families, children etc.) and location. We will aim for a mix of rural and urban-based providers. Having compiled the list we will organise the groups to ensure the best mix at each session. It may be that we have mixed groups, or organise them in to themes e.g. by beneficiary type.

The survey and interviews of autistic people will add significant value to the evaluation and be conducted in collaboration with organisations that work directly with autistic people.

We have allocated a total of **20.25 days** to the consultations, the workshops and the survey of autistic people.

Stage 5: Reporting

Section 2.4 describes how we will analyse the qualitative and quantitative information and the desk research. Based on the evidence, ekosgen will prepare a draft evaluation report that will fully answer the research questions. It will be succinct (maximum 60 pages), written in plain English, easy to digest, incorporate visuals, and clearly articulate the findings, the learning and the recommendations. We will submit the and following feedback, make any necessary refinements and adjustments to finalise the report. The report will be of a publishable standard and we are very used to using the Scottish Government's reporting format.

We will prepare a proposed structure in advance and agree it with the client. At this stage we expect it will cover:

- Introduction and overview of evaluation methods
- Background and evolution of the Autism Strategy for Scotland.
- Progress against the strategy's recommendations and priorities, and additional outcomes.
- Impacts of the strategy across its lifetime. This will cover impacts on the quality of services, on service providers, on autistic people, its families and carers, and its influence on other strategies, policies and organisations. We will also aim to assess the sustainability of the outcomes and how one change has led to another, and the synergy and momentum that has been achieved.
- The lessons that can be learnt on what has worked well, what has been less successful, barriers that have inhibited progress, external factors that have had an influence, and how progress and impacts can be driven and maximised.
- Recommendations and considerations for the strategy beyond 2021.

Drawing on the key messages, we will prepare a 10 page Executive Summary that will be designed specifically to be accessible to autistic people. We will draft it, provide it to five autistic people/specialist and gather feedback. Based on this, we will make any necessary adjustments. We did this with the summary of our research into neurodiversity in digital tech. The summary will adhere to best practice in accessibility.

We welcome the opportunity to present the findings to organisations involved in the evaluation and more widely to disseminate the findings and ensure inclusion. The slidepack that we will use will be useful for the Scottish Government in undertaking additional dissemination following the end of the contract.

Our resource table shows that we have allocated **17 days** to analysis, reporting and the presentation.

Delivering added value

Our team and methods will deliver added value in the following ways.

- Our objectivity and ability to work with, and across all relevant organisations including those that are led by autistic people.
- The team's personal experience of autism and neurodiversity and our understanding that it can be a sensitive and emotive subject. We are skilled and experienced in undertaking research that covers sensitive areas including mental ill health, suicide, involvement in the criminal justice system, homelessness and people who have had negative experiences of services and statutory organisations.
- Our experience of carefully and methodically mapping progress of strategies and being consistent in assessing the extent to which outcomes have been achieved.
- Clear and transparent attribution of impacts to the strategy and identification of any other contributing factors.
- The preparation and process we will use to involve autistic people in testing and refining the research tools so that they are genuinely co-produced
- Our detailed approach to communication and recruitment to ensure that we reach into the range of stakeholder groups and beyond 'the usual suspects'
- The team's recognition that within the autism community, there are a range of different views and priorities and our commitment to ensuring that this range is reflected in our research with policy professionals, autism organisations and experts.
- Careful analysis to ensure balance and buy in to the outcomes.
- The steps we will take to remove barriers to participation for all stakeholders in advance of the consultation or survey, during the research, and following it.
- Clearly drawing out and articulating the lessons learnt from the evaluation of the strategy since 2011.
- Providing evidence-based recommendations on future priorities, activities and interventions.
- Placing the evaluation in the current context of autism, neurodiversity and wider policy objectives.
- Bringing our understanding and involvement in wider policy areas such as skills and training, employability, health and well-being, diversity and inequalities, education, social care, and community cohesion.
- We are proposing to gather information directly from autistic people during the evaluation as we are committed to ensuring that autistic people have a voice. Later in this proposal we set out how we will encourage and support their participation to maximise accessibility. We are skilled and experienced at engaging people in research including those who may find it more challenging and neurodiverse people. We recognise that change can be particularly difficult for some autistic people and that emerging from lockdown may be daunting. Our team will take account of this during the research and be sensitive and responsive to the needs of individuals.

- Preparing and delivering a presentation to disseminate finding and leave the Scottish Government with a tool for future awareness raising about the research findings.

Question 2.3: Previous examples

ekosgen is well versed in completing equalities research, including working with service providers and people in the community who may face particular challenges, for example neurodivergent individuals. This is demonstrated in our recent 'Neurodiversity in the Scottish Digital Technologies Industry' research for Skills Development Scotland, and following on action planning workshops.

ekosgen is also experienced in reviewing and assessing strategies to understand progress to date, impact and inform future strategy implementation. In 2019, ekosgen reviewed the Early Learning and Childcare action plan to attract under-represented groups in to the sector for Skills Development Scotland and partners, methodically working through the action plan to assess progress against each priority. We reviewed and refreshed East Lothian Council's Economic Development Strategy for the period 2012-2020, given significant changes in the external environment such as Brexit, austerity and the ageing population. ekosgen reviewed both Aberdeen City Council and Dundee City Council's cultural strategies, to assess the impact of creative and cultural investment and inform future investment decisions.

The following section provides details of ekosgen projects of direct relevance to the methodology proposed for the Scottish Strategy for Autism evaluation – that is, they have involved a national survey and focus groups in order to answer a research question.

These projects used a similar mixed method primary research approach as that proposed for this evaluation, employing a carefully planned sampling framework. We have proposed to adopt the same approach for this commission.

We therefore have extensive experience of engaging with and across stakeholder organisations and with multi-stakeholder groups to assist us in primary research, research promotion and communication with relevant organisations or individuals.

Project: Neurodiversity in the Scottish Digital Technologies Sector

Client: Skills Development Scotland

Date: September 2019 to February 2020

ekosgen was commissioned in September 2019 by Skills Development Scotland (SDS), in partnership with the Scottish Government, to undertake research into neurodiversity in the Scottish digital technologies industry and digital technology occupations in other sectors. SDS is leading on the agenda to close Scotland's digital technologies skills gap, and the aim of the research was to provide recommendations for the development of a wider action plan to increase the participation of neurodivergent people in digital technology, with the action plan intended to bring together specialist stakeholders.

In developing the evidence base, ekosgen carried out an extensive literature review to identify existing barriers and challenges, as well as highlight any instances of best practice among employers in Scotland and more broadly. Following this, ekosgen completed the primary research stage which included a consultation programme with a variety of groups, including specialist stakeholders (such as Scottish Autism, Scottish Women's Autism Network, Inclusion Scotland and Enable Scotland), employers, teaching and careers staff, autism-specific training providers, and neurodivergent people.

When interviewing neurodivergent people, the majority of whom were autistic, we were very careful to gain informed consent to the research, explaining the purpose of the study and the value of participating, and that all responses would be anonymous and non-identifiable. We offered consultees the option of engaging in person (at a range of neutral venues), by telephone or online, and offered to send all consultees the questions in advance.

The outcome of the research was a final report outlining key findings, including the main barriers to employment and while in employment faced by neurodivergent people, and recommendations for employers and stakeholders around how to overcome these barriers to encourage a more inclusive work environment in digital technologies. The report will feed into the development of a wider action plan intended to increase the participation of neurodivergent people in digital technologies.

Following on from this study, ekosgen was retained by SDS in June 2020 to plan and deliver a workshop with neurodiversity experts and key stakeholder groups. ekosgen presented the findings of the previous study, and facilitated discussions groups for ideas of actions centred on six key priorities for supporting neurodivergent individuals into digital education, training and employment. The findings of the workshop are being used to develop a digital skills action plan. As a result of the workshop, SDS has already launched a Neurodiversity Skills Fund to support training and address skills gaps, with a focus on cyber security, and are developing an autism-specific toolkit for digital employers.

Project: Evaluation of Tourism Scotland 2020 Strategy

Client: Scottish Enterprise

Date: January 2019 to June 2019

In 2019, ekosgen completed a review of Tourism Scotland 2020 (TS2020), the national tourism strategy for Scotland. TS2020 was launched in 2012 with the broad objectives of growing the value of Scotland's tourism economy through using its assets to attract new visitors, and through collaboration to ensure that the quality of visitor experience is consistently high. This in turn would drive visitor spend and recommendations, growing the impact of the visitor economy and the ability of Scotland to attract new markets.

A key part of the review was to assess performance against the KPIs set out in the strategy. It also aimed to identify achievements and outcomes, including progress on growing the understanding and development of Scotland's tourism assets, and how investment and delivery activity has responded to customer need and demand. Another important consideration of the review was to consider the collective impact achieved through the development, implementation and delivery of the strategy, and to assess the strategic added value achieved through the creation of the Tourism Leadership Group (TLG).

The study comprised desk research of existing strategy papers and progress reports, a comprehensive consultation programme with key stakeholders in the tourism sector, an online survey for tourism businesses and online focus groups with the members of the TLG to measure perceived collective impact. ekosgen promoted the online survey for tourism businesses in each of Scotland's tourism region through representative organisations, including Destination Management Organisation (DMOs), local tourism groups, local networks including councils and national bodies such as VisitScotland. ekosgen also arranged for the survey to be promoted online through social media by key organisations. This activity resulted in a high level of engagement for a sector that is typically over-surveyed.

Project: Evaluation of Tourism Scotland 2020 Strategy

The outputs of this review will form part of the evidence base being used to inform the planning and development of a refreshed national strategy for the tourism sector post 2020.

Project: Young People and the Highlands and Islands: Maximising Opportunities

Client: Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Date: 2015 and 2018

ekosgen was commissioned to undertake research into the attitudes and aspirations of young people (15-30 years) in the Highlands and Islands. The deficit of young people living in the region is a major issue as many young people continue to leave the region to access employment and education opportunities, meaning there are significantly less young people aged 15-30 living in the region than elsewhere in Scotland.

ekosgen's research in 2015 aimed to explore the changing attitudes and aspirations of young people in relation to the H&I, and the extent to which recent policy interventions had helped to address the issue of out-migration of young people from the region. A mixed method approach involved an extensive, in-depth online survey of young people both within and outwith the Highlands and Islands, coupled with a follow-up programme of online focus groups.

ekosgen promoted the online survey through a targeted social media campaign to foster interest and engagement in the research. We also liaised with key organisations in the region, including councils, university and college campuses, youth groups and community organisations to promote the survey online and their employees/students/members. ekosgen also designed a tailored postal survey which was also designed and distributed to all high schools in the region, and arranged for the data processing of over 1,000 paper survey responses. In total, the survey gathered over 4,400 valid responses from young people across the region.

In 2018 ekosgen was commissioned again by HIE to complete the same study. Building on the 2015 survey the 2018 study, led by Director Pamela Reid, had two principal aims: to provide an overview of the evolving attitudes and aspirations of young people in the Highlands and Islands, and how these had changed since 2015; and to identify gaps within the current provision of education, training and employment, and consider how opportunities can be maximised for all young people. The overarching aim of the study was to understand young people's views on the region, how these had changed since 2015 and what can be done to make the region more attractive to young people.

The project again consisted of an in-depth online survey of young people both within and outwith the Highlands and Islands – which again achieved a high response rate of over 3,000 young people – coupled with a programme of online focus groups to garner more in-depth qualitative feedback. An extensive social media engagement campaign was used to foster interest and engagement in the research. A stakeholder consultation programme was also undertaken to explore the perspectives of employers, policy-makers and key groups in relation to the study.

For both studies, we produced a final report outlining the key findings on young people's views of the Highlands and Islands. This included their perceptions of employment/educational opportunities, their plans with regard to staying and leaving, the compromises they think are made by living in the region and their economic and social priorities for making the region more attractive to young people. In addition to providing conclusions and future recommendations for HIE and partners we

produced separate outputs presenting findings by area (e.g. Orkney, Shetland, Argyll) and by equalities characteristic (e.g. gender, age, disability, ethnicity). All of the study outputs were designed with final reader in mind and were presented in an easily digestible format using infographics, charts and graphs where possible.

Project: National and Local Labour Markets for the Social Care Workforce

Client: Scottish Government and COSLA

Date: January 2019 to December 2019

ekosgen was commissioned by Scottish Government and COSLA to complete a high-profile research project to better understand the social care workforce in Scotland. The study provided evidence of the way in which local and national labour markets impact on the social care workforce, how different parts of the social care sector interact, and what these interactions mean for workforce planning locally and nationally.

The methodology involved extensive desk research and a primary research programme which included key stakeholder consultations and several large-scale online surveys. This was the largest workforce survey carried out in the sector in Scotland, with almost 10,000 social care employees and employers participating in the research, reflecting the strength of interest and desire to have their views taken on board. ekosgen worked closely with the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), as well as the study steering group, to pilot, promote and distribute the online survey to relevant audiences. Having trusted intermediaries promote the research and a well-drafted, easy to understand and complete questionnaire were vital in securing such a high response rate.

The final reporting outputs have been used to inform workforce planners at local and national levels in helping to forecast, and consider how best to respond to, recruitment and retention challenges in the social care workforce in Scotland.

The final report presented the findings of the study for policy-makers to better understand the social care workforce in Scotland. Social care encompasses a number of sub-sectors – including early learning and childcare (ELC), adult day care, adult residential care, and care at home – and there are a wide range of settings, roles and occupations within the sector overall. The final report highlighted the differences between employees and employers in these sub-sectors, settings and roles, as well as geographical variations throughout Scotland.

In addition to the main report, three additional reports were produced. These focused on:

- The ELC sector (because of the particular issues facing ELC as a result of the (then) imminent expansion by 2020). This has now been postponed.
- The implications for future workforce planning (makes recommendations for future workforce planning in particular how best to respond to recruitment and retention challenges; and
- A case study report which explores key local labour market characteristics and issues around recruiting into the social care sector in four different areas (Aberdeen, Argyll & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway and South Lanarkshire).

Question 2.4: Recruitment, assessments and data analysis

As outlined in Question 2.2, the primary research for this evaluation includes stakeholder consultations, workshops with local support providers and an online survey of autistic people. The recruitment, assessment and analysis of resulting data for this primary research is discussed in this section.

At the time of writing, we are still in the process of COVID-19 restrictions, which are likely to continue in some form for the foreseeable future. This can be daunting to many, and so the recruitment and undertaking of any primary research should take this into account by, firstly, avoiding any face-to-face contact, and, secondly, aiming to be as easy and accessible as possible for participant.

Recruitment

Raising awareness about the evaluation will be vital in order to achieve buy-in from consultees, maximise participation and gain endorsement to the study's findings and recommendations. Effective communication will be particularly important in reaching stakeholders, autism service providers and the population of autistic people in Scotland. The communications plan, set out in Question 2.2, will be crucial in this regard.

Once the research tools have been agreed, and the online survey has been tested and finalised, we will mobilise the communication plan outlined in Question 2.2, contacting intermediaries that have agreed to support the research and providing them with content for promotion.

The following sets out how we will recruit participants to each of the three strands of primary research.

Policy professionals, autism organisations, experts and delivery organisations

As discussed, we will work closely with the Scottish Government study steering group to identify appropriate stakeholders consultees for consultations and workshops. In line with GDPR, we propose providing the Scottish Government with the text for an email to send out asking for consent to be contacted by ekosgen. It will explain the aims of the evaluation, the benefits it will deliver, what their input will involve and provide a named ekosgen contact who will arrange the consultation. We find that this method works best in securing stakeholder buy-in and participation, which is vital for this study.

Autistic people

We will primarily recruit autistic people to complete the online survey and interviews through trusted intermediaries. We will ask organisations, such as Scottish Autism, One Stop Shops, the National Autistic Society and the Scottish Society for Autism, to distribute the survey to their members/networks on our behalf. ekosgen has experience of promoting research through intermediaries, for example we promoted our survey of the social care workforce in 2019 through the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Social Services Council, and achieved c.10,000 responses.

We will also ask intermediaries to promote the research and the survey through their website and social media, and we will again provide them with focused content for website posts and Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn posts which will include the survey link.

Given that the online survey will be a 'reach all' approach to maximise participation, we will not draw samples or quotas for responses. However, while the survey is live, ekosgen will regularly monitor the profile of responses. If there is particularly low representation by, for example, geography, gender, age group or other agreed characteristics, then ekosgen will work with the intermediary organisations to target additional messaging to those groups to stimulate responses. We did this in our Young People and the Highlands and Islands survey, targeting social media posts and intermediary support for areas of the Highlands and Islands with lower response rates. The 20 interviews with autistic people will ensure that we speak to people of different ages, in different circumstances and in rural and urban areas.

Table 2.2 summarises our approaches to recruitment across the three types of primary research.

Table 2.2: Primary research recruitment

Group	Recruitment methods
Stakeholder consultations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying organisations/individuals with the client Ensuring representation across location, service and workstream
Workshop attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying relevant attendees with the client Ensuring representation across location, service and workstream
Online survey and interviews with autistic people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct contact from trusted intermediaries Website promotion Social media promotion Ensuring representation by geography and personal characteristic

Undertaking the assessments

The following section sets out how we will undertake the assessments with the three different primary research groups.

Consultations with policy professionals, autism organisations and experts

ekosgen is expert at using research tools flexibly. We will have one topic guide for these stakeholder consultations and will use it flexibly, adjusting the questions and probes depending on the nature of the consultee(s) in question.

Immediately following the stakeholder list being agreed and the ‘warm-up’ email being administered from the client, ekosgen will follow-up with stakeholders to arrange a convenient time for the consultations, offering a wide range of dates and times. We are used to working flexibly around consultee’s diaries.

The stakeholder consultations will be undertaken one-to-one, or in small groups if there are multiple consultees from the same organisation. We will give consultees the option of telephone, Microsoft Team and Skype, as we know that some organisation’s networks are not compatible to some platforms. ekosgen has conference call facilities where small groups want to be consulted by telephone.

The lines of enquiry are set out at Table 2.1 which demonstrates how we will address the research questions, probe for evidence and examples, and ensure that the information we gather is comprehensive and of high quality.

Service provider workshops

Given the current pandemic, we propose delivering the service provider workshops online via Zoom. This allows everyone to see one another, with the added function of being able to split larger groups into ‘breakout rooms’ if needed. We have recently used this method to good effect on a number of projects.

The workshops will be carefully structured to ensure full and genuine participation. We will agree a structure for the workshops however, at this stage, we anticipate the following:

- An introduction to the evaluation – including study aims and research questions and what we will cover in the session

- An overview of the Scottish Autism Strategy and its evolution including emerging findings from the desk review.
- Facilitated discussions in on-lone 'breakout rooms' in order to stimulate discussion and allow everyone to participate. Suggested lines of enquiry are provided in Table 2.2.1
- Summary of workshop discussion and findings – 'breakout rooms' feeding back to whole group
- Next steps for the evaluation

During the discussion we will use ratings and prioritisation to gain a clear understanding of where each priority and action fits.

Online survey and interviews with autistic people

It is important the research is particular to the needs of autistic people, while recognising that they are not a homogenous groups, and do not all have the same needs.

The online survey for autistic people will be delivered through SurveyMonkey. As previously mentioned in Question 2.2, we will offer respondents the opportunity to complete an online Easy Read version of the survey, as well as a paper copy option for those that are less digitally literate. In all email correspondence and in the survey introduction we will provide a named ekosgen contact to support survey respondents and answer any questions, and we will discuss with trusted intermediaries the possibility of them providing named survey support also.

The participant information will clearly state that the online survey will comprise of largely tick-box questions with a small number of open-ended questions for qualitative comments. When working with the autistic community it is important to clearly outline to participants what taking part in the survey will involve, to avoid any shock and anxiety associated with being presented with tasks not previously mentioned.

We will keep the survey 'live' for as long as possible within the study timescales, in order to maximise the response, however it is important to outline a closing date/time for online surveys so that participants are aware of when they need to complete it by.

The interviews will be conducted through Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype or phone, whatever the interviewee prefers and has access to. We will provide a photograph of the interviewer in advance and ask the interviewee if they have any requests or requirements. We will send the questions in advance along with clear information on what they can expect to happen.

Data analysis

The evaluation will generate large quantities of quantitative and qualitative data that must be analysed to provide a credible evidence base that will stand up to scrutiny and recommendations that the Scottish Government can be confident in. To achieve this, ekosgen will take a structured approach to analysing data by developing an analysis framework. This will ensure rigorous and consistent analysis, providing transparency from research tool design to data collection, analysis and interpretation. It will draw out key themes, and ensure a coherent narrative and presentation of the evaluation findings in the final outputs.

Firstly, we will review all Autism Strategy documents, monitoring information, and evidence of activities and progress. Our analysis of strategy progress will be mapped against specific activities and intended outcomes, in order to remain focused on what the strategy set out to achieve.

The **qualitative data** gathered through consultations and workshops will be analysed by sorting data thematically in the analysis framework against the research questions. The analysis will focus on contextualising the findings of the online survey, and will provide more depth on key points to complement and illustrate quantitative findings. We will provide a balanced assessment of the views provided and a sense of scale of each finding.

For the **quantitative data**, gathered through the online survey of autistic people, the analysis framework will clearly set out how the responses to each question will be analysed, for example by age group, gender, location and so forth. It will be developed to align with the research questions, set out in the brief and expanded in Section 1.

For some characteristics, it is unlikely that we will be able to give specific reporting due to sample size, and we will be careful not to present any data that is disclosive or could result in individual's opinions being identifiable.

3 Quality management and delivery

Question 3.1: Proposed delivery model

Detailed project plan

Figure 3.1 sets out the proposed timetable in line with the brief's requirements. We anticipate that the study will commence w/c 31st August 2020, following the award of contract the previous week. The study will run for approximately seven months in total. This is more than ample time to complete the desk-based review, design and administer the primary research programme and draft and present a report which clearly sets out the evidence, findings and recommendations.

Milestones and deliverables are marked with an 'X'. These include:

Milestone/deliverable	Week commencing
Inception meeting	31 st August 2020
Inception report and project plan	31 st August 2020
Completion of the desk-based review	26 th October 2020
Completion of the consultations	7 th December 2020
Completion of the virtual workshops	25 th January 2021
Draft Report submission	8 th March 2021
Final Report submission	15 th March 2021
Presentation	29 th March 2021

The project plan also includes indicative timings for quarterly update reports (marked with a 'UR'), which will be within 10 days of the end of each quarter, as requested in the brief. These will be:

Update report	Week commencing
First	19 th October 2020
Second	14 th December 2020
Third	15 th March 2021

We have allowed for a fortnight over the Christmas and New Year's holiday period, during which time we know from experience that it will be difficult to engage people in research.

We can confirm that we have the systems, processes and staff in place to effectively project manage this study to budget, on time, and to the client's expectations. Our team brings a strong existing understanding of islands and remote community issues and stakeholder landscape, which will allow us to get the study up and running quickly and effectively.

Figure 3.1: Project plan

Stage/Task	Week commencing	ekos Staff	Days	31-Aug	14-Sep	28-Sep	12-Oct	26-Oct	09-Nov	23-Nov	07-Dec	21-Dec	04-Jan	18-Jan	01-Feb	15-Feb	01-Mar	15-Mar	29-Mar	
Stage 1: Inception and project management																				
	Inception meeting and note	PR, JH, AF	1	X																
	Project management over the 7 month evaluation	JH	2																	
	Quarterly update reports	PR, CB	2.5					UR				UR							UR	
Stage 2: Desk research and analysis																				
	Identify and collate context materials and strategy documentation	CB	1																	
	Review documents and understand actions, milestones and anticipated outcomes	JH, AF	2.5						X											
	Map evidence of progress against each outcome	PR, AF	1.5																	
Stage 3: Project mobilisation																				
	Research tool design and testing	All	5																	
	Communication plan	PR, CB	1.5																	
Stage 4: Primary research with stakeholders and informants																				
	Consultations with policy professionals, autism organisations and experts (x20)	All	8.25								X									
	Workshops with autism service providers (x8)	PR, JH, AF	5											X						
	Interviews with autistic people (x20)	PR, JH, CB	5.5																	
	Dissemination and management of survey of autistic people	JH, CB	1.5																	
Stage 5: Analysis and reporting																				
	Qualitative and quantitative data analysis	All	7																	
	Draft Report	All	6														X			
	Final Report	All	2															X		
	Preparation and delivery of presentation	PR, JH, CB	2																X	

Christmas Holidays

Project performance and management arrangements

A Study Director and Project Manager are identified on every commission to ensure clear points of contact and consistent communication occurs throughout each study.

The Project Manager for this commission () will remain in regular contact with the client team to ensure you remain informed of progress, any issues encountered can be discussed and addressed as quickly as possible and emerging findings can be shared. We ask that a key contact person is also identified in the Scottish Government to ensure consistency.

The Study Director for this commission () will act as **Quality Assurer**, ensuring overall quality control. Her role will be to oversee all study outputs, manage the project plan and risk register and supervise the team. She will attend all project meetings and provide written updates on progress to the client team at regular intervals (to be agreed at inception).

Our proposed team is tailored to the specific requirements of the evaluation to ensure there is the correct blend of skills, seniority and experience. The team included an ekosgen Director with ultimate decision making and responsibility.

Question 3.2: Ethical and data protection considerations

Ethical considerations

We are committed to providing the highest standards in research and will adhere to these standards in this commission for the Scottish Government.

We are also fully aware of and adhere to the Government Social Research Unit ethical guidelines for conducting research and our responsibility to:

- Ensure participation is based on valid informed consent;
- Enable participation;
- Ensure the sound application and conduct of social research methods and appropriate dissemination and utilisation of the findings;
- Avoid personal and social harm; and
- Ensure non-disclosure of identity and personal information.

In the study we will consider equality and diversity issues as we develop and implement the research methods. This will mean ensuring a representative sample of stakeholder groups, autism service providers and autistic people by geography across Scotland (including urban and rural areas), and different types of service provider (based on their local, region or national remit and/or types of services provided). In our online survey of autistic people, we will consider equality characteristics, such as gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation, in order to understand if such personal characteristics have impacted on individual's experience of service delivery.

We will also ensure that when questioning stakeholders and individuals, we understand whether their experiences are referring to pre- or post-COVID-19 lockdown, given that the current lockdown is likely to have a substantial impact on the way in which people access or deliver vital services.

Our questioning will not be intrusive, onerous or violate privacy. We will only collect data that is required for the specific purposes of the strategy evaluation.

Respondents will not be required to provide contact details unless they wish to. Where contact details are provided we will detach these from the responses and store them separately. This is the approach we took to undertake research with over 3,000 young people across the Highlands and Islands in 2018, and before that, over 4,500 in 2015.

In analysis and reporting, no one individual or organisation (whether expert autism group, service provider or individual) will be identifiable or comments attributable to an individual. If we use examples to illustrate findings, they will be anonymous.

Informed consent

ekosgen will ensure that all participants understand the aims and objectives of the research in the extent of their involvement, how the information they provide will be used, reported, stored and disposed of, and the extent to which we can guarantee confidentiality. This will be clearly explained in the introduction to the online survey of autistic people. It will cover:

- Details of the study aims and purpose;
- The fact that participation is voluntary and anonymous;
- The themes covered in the survey;
- The estimated length of time to complete the survey;
- How their responses/data will be used; and
- Who ekosgen are, and a named ekosgen contact for any queries.

Encouraging and enabling access

ekosgen will take a number of steps to maximise engagement as it is vital that the evaluation gathers the views and insights from a wide range of stakeholder groups and interests. The steps comprise:

- Prepare an information pack for “gatekeeper” organisations explaining the background to the research and how the findings will inform and benefit the lives of autistic people in Scotland. This will include materials they can use to raise awareness about the research;
- Provide a named contact within the ekosgen team;
- Be flexible in our approach, methods and timings of the research. This will be particularly important given Covid-19; and
- Work creatively to overcome any issues for example GDPR/data protection and disseminating surveys.

The second challenge is encouraging stakeholders and autistic people to participate in the research. This is one that we have faced many times before and we have tried and tested ways of overcoming it. To overcome this and ensure engagement we will:

- Draft concise information sheets which outline the purpose and value of the research, sets out the methods and opportunities for participating and include a link to the online survey
- Be clear about the benefits and value of the evaluation;
- Have our work endorsed and promoted by key organisations and trusted intermediaries
- In all cases, ensure that the research tools are well designed, not over-onerous and that participating is a satisfying and meaningful experience;
- Test the survey and topic guide with a test panel of autistic people
- Provide the survey in Easy Read format as required

- Include individual interviews as an alternative research method.
- The survey will be delivered online for ease of completion and analysis and increased accessibility. However, we will offer the option of paper copies of the survey for any participants that are not digitally literate or do not have digital access.
- As well as providing a named ekosgen contact to support with completing the survey or any questions respondents might have, we will work with intermediary organisations to provide known and trusted support to any respondent that need it.
- The participant information and the online survey introduction will clearly set out the themes that are covered in the survey, and the types of questions (i.e. tick box, Likert scale, comment boxes) so that participants are aware in advance of completing. Stakeholders and workshop attendees will also receive topics in advance of the consultations/workshop.
- Stakeholders and autistic people will be offered a variety of media for their consultation e.g. telephone, Microsoft Teams, Skype, and we will be flexible with timings in order to be accommodated in their diaries.

Data protection considerations

ekosgen will also conduct all aspects of the work in line with the GDPR legal framework. We have a Data Protection Policy which outlines our approach to the management of information security and data protection.

The **Data Protection Officer**, [REDACTED], is responsible for reviewing this policy on an annual basis and implementing any additional requirements identified by means of data protection impact assessments. The register detailing all changes to our processes is available on a client's request.

This policy applies to all employees and interested parties of ekosgen such as outsourced suppliers. Any breach of the GDPR will be dealt with under ekosgen's disciplinary policy and may also be a criminal offence, in which case the matter will be reported as soon as possible to the appropriate authorities.

Partners and any third parties working with or for ekosgen and who have or may have access to personal data, will be expected to have read, understood and to comply with this policy. No third party may access personal data held by ekosgen without having first entered into a data confidentiality agreement contained within the company's Contractor's Agreement which imposes on the third party obligations no less onerous than those to which ekosgen is committed, and which gives ekosgen the right to audit compliance with the agreement.

Please see ekosgen's **Data Protection Policy** attached at **Appendix 1** for further information.

Question 3.3: Quality control

ekosgen is committed to high quality, insightful research and our approach to quality control and assurance is evident throughout our working practices. All of our assignments are managed and delivered in line with our Project Implementation Process (PIP), which is designed to ensure that projects are delivered on time, to budget and meet the client's objectives and expected standards.

The Project Implementation Process

The PIP system breaks down the project planning and delivery process into a number of key stages, each of which has a series of pro-forma for staff to follow. The process starts with the planning for proposal submission and continues beyond the submission and agreement with the client of the final report to the gathering of client feedback on our performance as part of our approach to securing continual improvement in our delivery of services. The PIP is clearly set out together with checklists

and guidance notes to help support the project manager in following the process. Best value is promoted through all stages of the process.

The most relevant elements of the PIP for this assignment are summarised below, although we would be happy to provide additional information if required:

- **Project control and issue management:** Throughout each assignment, the project manager has responsibility for ensuring the work is undertaken on time, to budget and to the satisfaction of the client. To ensure that resources are utilised as effectively as possible, we look to agree with the client the detail of the final product at an early stage and ensure the team works towards this;
- **Regular review and update:** We place significant emphasis on this aspect of all the projects that we undertake and our clients can expect the commitments that we make at the inception stage around communication protocols and the frequency of updates to be met. Working to our PIP guidelines, regular internal reviews are undertaken, chaired by the project manager and attended by all members of the study team;
- **Delivery of final product:** An important part of our PIP process is ensuring we are able to deliver a high-quality end product to the client. This includes submission of a draft report with sufficient time allowed for receipt of client comments and any associated revisions. Typically, we will arrange a meeting with the client to talk through the draft final report in order to ensure that it fully meets their needs and expectations. Any presentations required by the client are also discussed and copies of presentations are provided in advance to ensure the client is aware of how the work will be presented;
- **Quality checking:** All of our project outputs, including reports, presentations, questionnaires and briefing papers, are subject to a Study Director's review before being sent to the client. They are also all proof-read (final reports and other substantial outputs are proof-read by two different members of staff);
- **Post assignment follow-up:** Within four weeks of the final report being signed off, a client follow up call is made to ascertain if the client was happy with the final product, if it met their expectations and where our service could have been improved. This call is made by a member of our corporate team to ensure that you are able to freely comment on your experiences of the project.

Additional quality in-house assurances include Virtual Cabinet (an electronic document management system), and our Replicon Time Management System (TMS) supports project management and budget control by allowing time to be recorded against tasks. This is web-based and allows the project manager to review progress against tasks by individual team member and re-profiling of tasks as necessary. The capacity of individual members of staff is reviewed weekly across the company to identify and manage peaks in project activity. We also operate an internal capacity planner enabling profiling jobs and available days over a three-month forward period.

Managing team inputs

On all assignments, it is important that team members have clearly defined roles and know when their inputs are needed and how they will feed into the final outputs. An internal team launch meeting will be held shortly after the inception meeting to brief all team members on the project aims, methods and timescales, as well as the contribution that individuals will make. An internal work plan will be prepared for the evaluation that shows the timing of tasks and ensures sufficient time is allowed for review and enhancement where necessary before materials are submitted to the client team.

Once a project is underway, weekly team meetings will be held. These sessions provide an opportunity to review progress, allocate tasks for the coming week, discuss any issues encountered and how they have been or will be overcome and share emerging findings. This process allows a

comprehensive overview of progress to be gained and for steps to be taken where necessary to ensure all commissions continue to be delivered to programme. Early discussion of project outputs will also be encouraged to allow all team members to understand how their tasks will feed into the final reports.

Ensuring quality

The draft outputs for this evaluation are as follows:

- A social research report, clearly articulating the projects findings,
- An executive summary, accessible to people with autism,
- A presentation for organisations involved in the evaluation.

These project management and quality assurance procedures will ensure that these outputs will be drafted at high quality and publishable standard. This will minimise the number of revisions and version required to reach output sign-off, reducing the client time resource needed.

In addition, as specified in the brief, the ekosgen Project Manager will provide the Scottish Government Contract Manager with fortnightly telephone and email updates on the evaluation's performance against KPIs, general progress, emerging risks and completion of study milestones. This will ensure that the Scottish Government is fully informed and up-to-date with all progress and any emerging risks throughout the duration of the evaluation contract, and that any potential blockages can be discussed and overcome at an early stage.

Question 3.4: Key risks and management

At ekosgen we undertake a thorough risk assessment of each project. Careful consideration of the methodological risks that may emerge during the evaluation have been summarised in Table 3.1 below. We will discuss these with the client at inception and take further measures to mitigate these if required.

Carrying out research against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic raises some questions and risks. It is very likely that the current situation will have some impact on peoples' attitudes and perceptions, some negative (e.g. autism services, employment opportunities, education) and perhaps some positive (e.g. an opportunity for key service providers to take stock and carefully plan future delivery). As with other research we have undertaken since lockdown, we will design the research to encourage people to acknowledge Covid-19 but base their answers on longer term reflection and experience. Of course many areas of questioning will probably not be influenced by Covid-19, for example strategy activities pre-2019.

Table 3.1: Risk management

Risks	Likelihood	Mitigating action(s)	Recovery plan
Delays in implementation - accessing reports, data, consultees, receiving responses from client to work submitted etc.	Low-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting notes will record actions and timescales Regular review of progress against workplan and milestones Client commitment to meeting agreed deadlines for feedback and responses. Forward planning and ensuring the allocation of adequate staff resources to tasks and carrying out tasks in parallel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accelerating the elapsed time for later tasks to compensate for slippage elsewhere.
Difficulties in securing stakeholder participation to consultations	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders have already been identified by the client. Early contact to agree times for interview with targeted consultees. Assistance from client in engaging consultees, if required. ekosgen will be flexible in terms of availability and consultation mode (e.g. telephone, Teams, Skype etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review overall approach and match to what is deliverable. Client identify alternative stakeholders for consultation.
Difficulty in recruiting attendees to virtual workshops	Low-medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendees will have been identified by ekosgen and the client. Early contact from the client with information sheet on evaluation and workshop attendance. Early contact from ekosgen to agree availability and dates/times for workshops. Sending attendees workshop agenda and content etc. in advance of workshop to secure buy-in. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ask organisations to put forward alternative attendees. Run fewer 'breakout' groups to ensure enough participation in each group.
Intermediary organisations unwilling/ineffective at promoting the online survey	Low-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement will be sought during stakeholder consultation, including discussion of best way to proceed, and who to lead. Clear messaging about the need and value of gathering feedback on the views and experiences of autistic people. Provide stakeholder organisations with a cover email which articulates the benefits of participation and includes a survey link. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the barriers Ask organisations to, at a minimum, endorse the survey through website and social media promotion.
Low response to the online survey of autistic people and lack of participation in interviews.	Low-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distributed by trusted intermediaries and messages reinforced through multiple channels. Distribution of appropriate reminders. Survey introduction will make it clear to respondents how their data will be used and that responses will be anonymous. Careful questionnaire design and ease of completion Available in Easy Read format Support provided by intermediaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend survey period. Promote it through additional channels (e.g. direct contact from key stakeholder organisations, website and social media promotion). Consider 1-2-1 consultations to boost survey responses.

Risks	Likelihood	Mitigating action(s)	Recovery plan
Time over-run of the study	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Project Implementation Process is designed to provide project managers with the resources to ensure each study is delivered to time, budget and to a high quality. We will identify any potential challenges early on and work with the client to propose solutions to ensure that delays are mitigated. Regular contact between the study team and the client team, including frequent progress updates, will ensure that the client is aware of progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ekosgen and client will agree how best to respond to time over-run.
Changes in ekosgen team/staff illness	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Study Director will have a full overview of progress and process. The evaluation workplan will be regularly updated and we will hold notes/minutes from all client meetings and consultations. Study Director will give new team members a full briefing of the above documents to get them up to speed quickly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-opt equally qualified ekosgen staff member to the study.
Project going over budget	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ekosgen Project Director will regularly monitor the use of study resources against the agreed budget based on our method statement, and any amendments made at the inception meeting. This will give early warning of potential for overspend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ekosgen and client will agree how best to respond to budget overrun only where these reflect additional tasks.
Data confidentiality breach	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ekosgen has and adheres to robust data protection processes. Agree security protocol for the electronic transfer of all data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ekosgen has the processes for a data breach, including immediately alerting the correct individuals.
Loss of research data	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is stored securely on our Virtual Cabinet file storing system which requires password entry. All paper notes from primary research will be typed up electronically and stored on Virtual Cabinet, and paper copies destroyed. All data is backed up on a daily basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reformat data from system back-up.
Computer systems failure	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All computer-based data is backed up on a daily basis. ekosgen has a disaster recovery procedure in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reformat data from system back-up.
Client unhappy with outputs/ not up to expected standards	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure a shared understanding of the study aims and objectives at inception. We will work closely with the client and provide regular progress updates. Clear lines of communication, providing timely updates on any issues faced by the study team. We will share and agree draft output structures with the client prior to drafting, so the client is fully aware of what to expect These actions will ensure that the client is both fully aware of the study's progress and is satisfied that the outputs produced will meet requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediate remedial work to bring the outputs up to the expected high standards.

4 Technical experience and staffing

Question 4.1: Roles and responsibilities

We have committed a strong and experienced four-person team to deliver this important commission. The team is neurodiverse, with one of the team members having an ASD diagnosis. Figure 4.1 sets out the overall composition of the evaluation team, and their key roles and responsibilities.

Figure 4.1: Composition of evaluation team

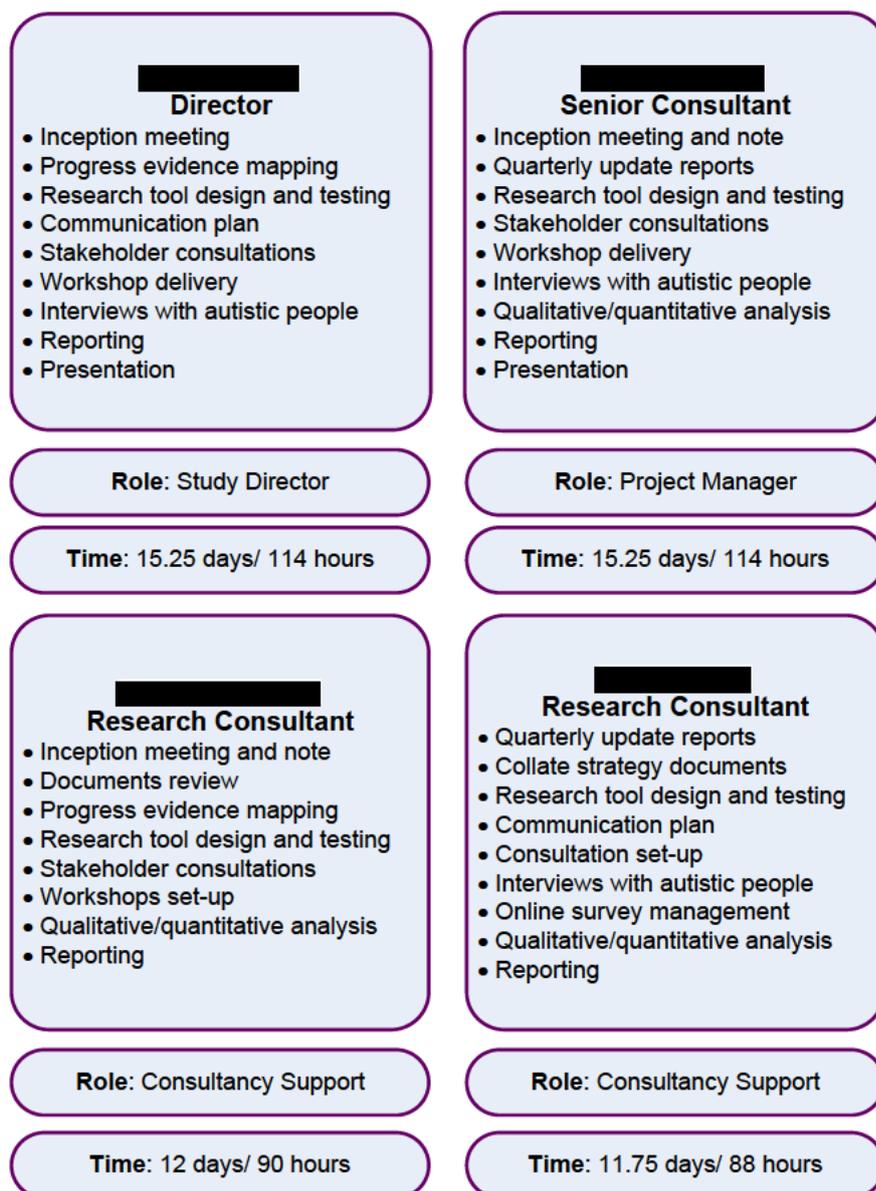


Figure 4.2 sets out our resource plan and staff allocation. We have dedicated a total of **54.25 days consultancy time** to the evaluation. This is based on a 7.5 hour working day. Approximately 56% of this is at Senior or Director level reflecting the significance of the work and the need for senior input at various stages, including project management, carrying out the primary research and drafting and presenting the report.

Figure 4.2: Staff allocation and resource plan

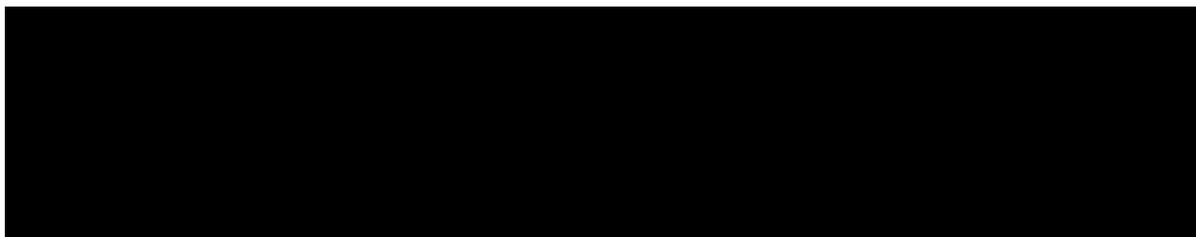
Stage/Task	Director	Senior Consultant	Research Consultant	Research Consultant	Total Days
Stage 1: Inception and project management					5.50
<i>Inception call and note of actions</i>	0.25	0.25	0.5		1.00
<i>Project management and quarterly update reports (x3)</i>	0.5	2		2	4.50
Stage 2: Desk research and analysis					5.00
<i>Identify and collate context materials and strategy documentation</i>				1	1.00
<i>Review documents and understand actions, milestone and anticipated outcomes</i>		0.5	2		2.50
<i>Map evidence of progress against each outcome</i>	0.5		1		1.50
Stage 3: Project mobilisation					6.50
<i>Research tool design and testing (topic guide, workshops and survey) including Easy Read version of survey</i>	1	1	2	1	5.00
<i>Develop and execute communication plan</i>	0.5			1	1.50
Stage 4: Primary research with stakeholders and informants					20.25
<i>Consultations with policy professionals, autism organisations and experts, including set up (x20 orgs)</i>	3	3	1.5	0.75	8.25
<i>Workshops with autism service providers (x8)</i>	2	2	1		5.00
<i>Interviews with autistic people (x20)</i>	2	1.5		2	5.50
<i>Dissemination and management of survey of autistic people</i>		0.5		1	1.50
Stage 5: Analysis and reporting					17.00
<i>Qualitative and quantitative data analysis</i>	2	2	2	1	7.00
<i>Draft and final report (including visuals)</i>	3	2	2	1	8.00
<i>Preparation and delivery of presentation</i>	0.5	0.5		1	2.00
Total Days	15.25	15.25	12	11.75	54.25

The following sets out a summary of key team member's experience, qualifications and skills. Please note that full CVs for all team members are provided at **Appendix 2**.

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¹⁹ <http://www.withkids.org.uk/>

[Redacted text block]



5 Cyber security

Please see below ekosgen's approach to information security and the controls that are in place to protect any data shared with ekosgen. This section follows the same structure of questioning in the brief.

Please note that since this proposal does not include any sub-contractors, the sharing of data with sub-contractors is not relevant for this commission. Please also note that we have appended our Data Protection Policy at Appendix 1, and are happy to provide any further details on data protection, processing and cyber security where necessary.

Data protection

ekosgen has a Data Protection Policy which outlines our approach to the management of information security and data protection.

The **Data Protection Officer**, [REDACTED], is responsible for reviewing this policy on an annual basis and implementing any additional requirements identified by means of data protection impact assessments. The register detailing all changes to our processes is available on a client's request.

This policy applies to all employees and interested parties of ekosgen such as outsourced suppliers. Any breach of the GDPR will be dealt with under ekosgen's disciplinary policy and may also be a criminal offence, in which case the matter will be reported as soon as possible to the appropriate authorities.

Partners and any third parties working with or for ekosgen and who have or may have access to personal data, will be expected to have read, understood and to comply with this policy. No third party may access personal data held by ekosgen without having first entered into a data confidentiality agreement contained within the company's Contractor's Agreement which imposes on the third party obligations no less onerous than those to which ekosgen is committed, and which gives ekosgen the right to audit compliance with the agreement.

Please see our **Data Protection Policy** attached at Appendix 1 for further information.

Data processing, transfer and security

Any data received by ekosgen as part of a study either from a client, a sub-contractor or generated directly by ekosgen through primary research, is immediately saved in our secure document management system – Virtual Cabinet. Each document can only be checked out to one user and has an accountable audit trail. Virtual Cabinet is accessed via employees logging into our secure remote desktop platform which is protected via a firewall appliance with anti-virus and web filtering installed on every endpoint. Each user has their own username and password which is changed every 30 days. Passwords are stored in an encrypted password vault, locked by password, IP address and multi-factor authentication. The file is encrypted with Windows 10BitLocker, to 256-bit AES standards.

All sub-contractors to an ekosgen contract are required to sign a sub-contractors agreement agreeing to abide by all of our policies with regards to data storage and transfer. Any transfer of data to our sub-contractors by email would be made conforming to the following instructions:

- The email address must be confirmed by the recipient prior to sending, preferably by sending an initial email;
- Wherever possible a password protected, encrypted transfer should be arranged, and documents should be saved as a PDF file;
- Passwords should be disclosed to the recipient separately via phone or SMS message; and

- Email trails should be kept for auditing purposes.

With respect to the secure transmission of data between Scottish Government, ekosgen and any sub-contractors, our processes depending on the mode of data transfer are as follows:

Transmission of data

Transporting data by mail

- The name address and postcode of the recipient will be confirmed prior to posting;
- All mail must be sealed in a robust envelope;
- Sensitive personal data which would disclose personal information of named individuals must only be sent by the Royal Mail Tracked 24 service which provides end to end tracking;
- When sending sensitive personal data, mail must be marked 'Private and Confidential: To be opened by Addressee only';
- If sending more than 5 records, a courier should be used; and
- A record of what has been posted, i.e. the content and who it was sent to, is kept in a log by the ekosgen corporate team.

Transporting data by phone

If a member of staff receives a request for personal or confidential information by phone, they must:

- Confirm the name, job title and organisation of the person requesting the information and whether it is a Subject Access Request or a Data Controller request;
- Take a contact number – this should be a main switchboard number and not a mobile or direct line where possible;
- Double check the request with the client first before disclosing any information;
- Should only disclose data via the phone where secure email transmission is not possible; and
- Document any data disclosed over the phone and record the reason why.

Transporting data by email

- The email address must be confirmed by the recipient prior to sending, preferably by sending an initial email;
- Wherever possible a password protected, encrypted transfer should be arranged, and documents should be saved as a PDF file where possible;
- Passwords should be disclosed to the recipient separately via phone or SMS message; and
- Email trails should be kept for auditing purposes.

In the event that data transfer was via USB, only drives secured from the ekosgen Corporate Team are permitted to be used. These are all tracked to ensure the Corporate Team knows at any given time who is using which drive and for what purpose. All data that is transferred to a USB drive will be encrypted with Windows 10BitLocker, to 256-bit AES standards. The encryption process is automatic to avoid this being forgotten and the copied data becoming vulnerable. When the USB is no longer needed it will be returned to the Corporate Team. When returned, USB drives are completely erased and formatted using the CCleaner application.

Firewalls, user accounts and passwords

ekosgen has a single production environment comprising of two domain controllers, a file server and a Remote Desktop Server. Information is logged and securely stored about the server. It covers IP address, MAC address, physical location, operating system (OS) version, patch level, services offered, and person responsible. There is a detailed hardware/software installation log.

- Deployment of internal servers is restricted to IT. No other staff member has deployment rights.
- Only roles required for a given server are installed, and then maintained as per the Microsoft Best Practices Analyzer (for example, domain controllers are dedicated to AD/DNS/DHCP).
- Administrative access is restricted by IP address, username and password and is only upon instruction of the management team.
- The server is in a separate room in the main office suite in ekosgen headquarters in Glasgow. The room is kept at the optimum temperature and is locked and alarmed when unattended.
- The server is monitored for resource availability and uptime by our 3rd party supplier Agile IT via a UK-based software agent (SolarWinds).
- Point-in-time recovery for data is generally available for a rolling 90 day period. Entire VM recovery points are created weekly and kept for 3 months.
- Company staff have user-access to the Remote Desktop Server. Administrative access is limited to IT.
- Security patches are applied as they are made available, cumulative patches deployed semi-annually.
- Once a business case for change is made, the change is planned and agreed, backups taken, the change executed and the success monitored.

Authorised individuals access

All user accounts are provisioned with role-based access to just the items required to perform their job. All changes to user accounts have to be approved by a manager and logged on a managed helpdesk system including account de/re-activations. No network administrator access is granted to regular user accounts.

Dedicated administration accounts are used for all services:

- Local network administration
- External supplier administration
- Network appliance administration

No PC administrator access is given to regular user accounts for any corporate desktops. Local administration access to laptops that never connect directly to the corporate network is granted for named user accounts.

Network administration is managed by a 3rd party supplier:

- Passwords are stored in an encrypted password vault, locked by password, IP address and multi-factor authentication
- Staff are vetted before being given access to the vault

Administrator accounts are reviewed quarterly by our IT supplier, Agile IT. When projects are completed, they are moved to an archive section of Virtual Cabinet which only senior management have access to. ekosgen's named data protection co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring staff maintain the security of their dataset; setting access requirements for the data; documenting the data made available to other services and establishing processes to ensure the quality of the data. They have a duty to ensure that restricted and confidential data is managed securely and appropriately, that the data is made available only to those people and systems that need access, and that access is provided in keeping with legislation and the Company's internal policies. If the data includes any personal data, they are also responsible for completing a Data Protection Impact Assessment. When projects are completed, they are moved to an archive section of Virtual Cabinet which only senior management have access to.

Protection from malware

Anti-virus is setup on all endpoints, and users can only access the corporate apps (not including email) via a Remote Desktop solution where each app is managed and patched centrally. Users do not have the ability to install software themselves in this environment.

Updates and hotfixes

The network infrastructure patches itself monthly, the client PCs patch themselves weekly with installed apps patched on a semi-annual basis. The server apps are patched as and when the vendors (VC) publish product updates, the servers themselves are patched semi-annually unless there is a critical update that needs to be applied immediately.

Training

All ekosgen staff are regularly trained on current policies, new policies and changes to existing policies. This is an integral strand of our staff CPD processes. As part of our intensive induction process each staff member is provided with their own copy of the staff handbook which includes all relevant policies and procedures. It is updated regularly with any changes to policies and processes and staff will be pointed to these changes in the first instance, in order to familiarise themselves with them. Any changes/updates are also communicated to staff in weekly team meetings and training sessions provided in the form of 'learning lunches'. We do not have regular home workers, with the exception of the current Covid-19 situation where all staff are working from home, all employees have been given the same training and follow the same processes regardless of whether they are office or home based.

Sub-contractors are given copies of our Information Security and Data Protection Policies at the start of each new project in case of updates from the last project and are required to sign a Contractor agreement agreeing to abide by our policies and processes.

Back up

Network administration is managed by a 3rd party supplier. As well as our main internet line we have a secondary line that our IT company would switch us to with very minimal downtime in the event of a problem with the main line. All of our staff connect to our physical server in our Glasgow office via a secure remote desktop connection which is protected via a firewall appliance with anti-virus & web filtering installed on every endpoint. All documents are stored in our secure document management system Virtual Cabinet. Our physical server is backed up daily to Virtual Servers hosted in Microsoft Azure. In the event of a system failure in Glasgow the Azure servers would be activated and backups restored.

Testing of disaster recovery

Back-ups are tested regularly, disaster recovery procedures are tested every 6 months. The last test date was 26th January 2020

Information Assurance Certification

Our Cyber Essentials application is currently in progress.

Non-scoring and information only questions

Question 1: Sustainability

Scotland and the Climate Emergency

With Scotland declaring a Climate Emergency in April 2019 ahead of the UK Government's decision to do so in May 2019, ekosgen has been acutely aware of the need to ensure a fairer and more sustainable Scotland to support citizens now and in future generations. We consider that our company's environmental policy, outlined below, is in line with this ambition. However, we work with all of our clients to ensure that wherever possible we minimise our environmental impact through delivery of our research commissions.

ekosgen's environmental policy and approach

For ekosgen, sustainability and social issues are central to our business strategy and activity. They colour and influence our activities as we strive to become an organisation that people wish to interact with, whether they are clients, employees or suppliers. In its provision of economic development consultancy services, the Company seeks to protect and enhance in particular, the environment and the wellbeing of its staff, clients and members of the public with which it engages during the conduct of its business. It requires all its offices and staff to comply with this policy.

We are committed to good environmental practice as part of our overall approach to corporate and social responsibility. We recognise that we have a responsibility to minimise our impacts on the environment as much as possible, and to conduct our business in a way which contributes to the sustainability of the environment in which we work and deliver our services, whilst continuing to deliver a high quality service to our clients.

Our policy is to take the environment into account in all appropriate decision making, not only in compliance with UK and EC legislative and statutory environmental requirements (which we view as a minimum standard), but in recognition that a quality environment should be available to all, not just to those who can afford it.

Our commitment, therefore, is a proactive and anticipatory approach, which embraces:

- Sustainable development in all our activities;
- Conservation of energy, both in the office and whilst site based;
- Use of renewable resources and the sustainable management of resources;
- Recycling of resources wherever possible to a higher standard than that required by UK law;
- Compliance with UK and EC legislation as a minimum, relating to the protection and preservation of the environment, transfer of waste, prevention of pollution to the environment, preservation of trees, plants and wildlife;
- Prevention and removal of nuisances which affect the quality of life of the end users and the public in general; and
- Assessment of the environmental impact of our proposed actions upon the end users and society as a whole.

Whilst we are a private company, we do not seek to make a profit at the cost of environmental quality. We therefore incorporate environmental concerns into our business planning process. As ekosgen has grown, we have sought to absorb relevant elements of environmental accreditations/standards such as ISO14001 and the Carbon Standard into our internal policies and day-to-day operations.

Staff members are made aware of the company's environmental policy as part of the induction process and regular updates are provided via inclusion in the company staff handbook and internal staff newsletters. All employees are aware of the role they are required to play in implementing the policy and are encouraged to identify opportunities to continue to minimise negative environmental impacts.

Office and Project Directors are also required to alert sub-contractors, suppliers and clients to the scope of our environmental policy. Some of the specific ways in which we support environmental action, reflecting the issues outlined above, include:

- Energy efficiency – e.g. keeping electrical equipment and lights switched off when not in use, ensuring our premises are well insulated and using other heat saving devices;
- Operating flexible equipment depreciation policies which take into account environmental impact when making an investment decision on the purchase of new equipment Recycling of waste wherever possible e.g., toner cartridges, paper and office consumables;
- Liaison with the waste collection and disposal authorities especially where it is anticipated that waste generated by the Company's operations will be subject to special control;
- Keeping up to date with latest developments and legislation relating to environmental protection including waste transfer and disposal, water and air pollution, conservation and preservation;
- Maintaining staff awareness and where necessary, implementing training in relation to energy efficiency and the impact of our projects and services upon the environment together with the encouragement of a positive and proactive approach towards energy conservation and environmental protection;
- Undertaking internal meetings and client meetings by Skype or telephone where appropriate to reduce the need for travel;
- The use of local suppliers for office products where required, minimising the environmental impacts of transporting goods; and
- Offering support to staff to travel to work by sustainable modes of transport including season ticket loans and a Cycle to Work scheme. Car mileage allowance has also been reduce to provide a disincentive to unnecessary car travel.

We work in partnership with our clients towards the promotion of the minimisation of environmental damage, environmental protection and improvement. We are committed to minimising the environmental impacts of our business activities wherever possible.

The survey method and environmental impact

To minimise the carbon footprint of the primary research in this commission, we are offering a predominantly online survey for autistic people, with the option to complete a hard-copy postal survey if necessarily. This is in recognition of the particular challenges that survey work faces in many of Scotland's remote communities with regard to digital connectivity, but also digital literacy across the population. Offering various options to complete the survey makes it more accessible to Scotland's autistic population.

These measures will go some way to reducing the carbon footprint of our delivery of the Scottish Autism Strategy evaluation survey. We believe these measures are a reasonable and proportionate response to mitigating the environmental impact of the research, but we will explore other possible measures as necessary with the client team at the inception meeting.

Question 2: Fair work practices

Fair work practices are fundamental to ekosgen's ethos as a company and we are fully committed to maintaining a well-managed, motivated and properly remunerated workforce. The company ensures this through a variety of measures, including:

- Creating employment opportunities in the areas in which we work;
- Employing permanent staff members rather than agency staff/short term contracts;
- Paying all staff members (including interns) the Living Wage;
- Providing a training and development package to all staff;
- Offering work experience placements/ internships to both school age and university students from the local area; and
- Providing flexibility for employees, for example by allowing employees to work from home where necessary and to adjust their working hours to fit around other commitments, such as childcare.

We are an accredited Scottish Living Wage Employer. Every member of staff in our organisation earns not just the minimum wage but the real Living Wage. ekosgen can confirm we are listed in the Living Wage Employer Map. Our fair working practices, such as paying the Living Wage, are built into all of our sub-contractor agreements, to ensure compliance by those companies and their staff that we choose to work with.

We offer flexible working and support for family-friendly working and wider work-life balance as well as providing all staff with a wellbeing health scheme with Westfield Health.

We are an Equal Opportunities employer and we do not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, disability, religion, age or sexuality. ekosgen is committed to retaining and up-skilling all of our staff where possible, and we are Investors in People accredited to Silver level. Our Performance and Career Management System provides a framework for regular reviews with staff regarding their performance, targets, training needs, career goals and work environment which impact on their ability to perform effectively in their role. All staff have a Career Plan which includes performance objectives, training activities and budget, to support them to meet career progression goals.

Question 3: Scottish Business Pledge

We have applied for the Scottish Business Pledge, which is a values-led partnership between Government and business. It is a shared ambition of boosting productivity, competitiveness, sustainable employment, and workforce engagement and development. We are awaiting a response on our application at this time.

Question 4: Living Wage

Yes, I am accredited.

Question 5: Business continuity and disaster recovery (BCDR)

Threat	H/M/L Risk	H/M/L Impact	Mitigation Actions including timescales	Responsible Owner
IT failure	L	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All documents stored in our secure system, Virtual Cabinet All staff can log into our secure remote desktop connection from the office and home Back-up services activated in event of IT failure As well as our main internet line we have a secondary line that our IT provider would switch us to with very minimal downtime in the event of a problem with the main line 	Agile IT
Fire	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff can log into our secure remote desktop connection from home ekosgen has an eternal UPS in the event of a short term power failure 	ekosgen
Backups	L	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ekosgen backups are completed daily by our IT provider Back-up services activated in event of IT failure 	Agile IT
Staff	M	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial Director to implement contingency plan Staff resourcing and capacity planning are reviewed weekly by the Commercial Director Staff from ekosgen's other offices, or their wide network of associates, can be brought into project teams at short notice Study Director will ensure additional staff are up to speed with projects 	ekosgen
Supply chain	L	L	n/a – this contract does not include any sub-contractors	ekosgen
Deliveries	L	L	n/a – this contract not require any deliveries	ekosgen

ekosgen have an established set of procedures to ensure business continuity at all times and this includes a disaster recovery plan which is annually updated and managed in partnership with our outsourced IT systems and maintenance provider of some 18 years, Agile IT Limited.

As a consultancy company we depend heavily on the rigour and robustness of our IT systems. All of our staff in each of our office locations in Sheffield, Manchester and Glasgow connect to our physical servers, which are located in our Glasgow office, via a secure remote desktop connection. This is protected via a firewall appliance with anti-virus and web filtering installed on every endpoint. All data and documents are stored in our secure document management system Virtual Cabinet. Our physical server is backed up daily to Virtual Servers hosted in Microsoft Azure. In the event of a system failure of our servers located in the Glasgow office, the Azure servers would be immediately activated and backups restored.

In the event of a fire, for example, this system would allow us to relocate in the event of such a disaster. For instance, we would take temporary office space in a serviced office business centre or staff would log in to our systems from home. We also make every effort to ensure the reliability of our equipment, including regular checks of our IT and server equipment, and have an external UPS in the event of a short term power failure.

Agile IT staff continually monitor our servers and peripheral systems and have an alert system in place to ensure they are aware of a problem as soon as it happens allowing them to put plans into action immediately according to the issue, i.e. internet line or server related. As well as our main private dedicated internet line, the company also leases a secondary line that our whole system can be switched on to in the event of a systems failure and with very minimal downtime.

With respect to the current COVID-19 pandemic, a set of procedures has also been put in place to ensure business continuity over and above disaster recovery protocols. In order to limit the chance of potential multiple staff absences as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic all of our staff have been working from home since 18 March until further notice from government. Our IT infrastructure enables all of our staff to work remotely, securely and virtually to chat, meet, call, and collaborate through a variety of digital platforms from their homes. We have taken all necessary steps to ensure that all client services continue uninterrupted. We have prepared a set of remote working protocols that will ensure our usual quality of service to clients and support to our staff and associates.

In the unlikely event that a large number of staff in our Glasgow office were absent at the same time (low risk) we have a contingency plan managed by our Commercial Director who oversees all staff resource and capacity planning, which allows us to draw on staff from our offices in Manchester and Sheffield and our Associate network. This would allow us to continue to deliver a commission as per our contractual obligations. However, most projects are likely to have at least three or four members of staff working on them so we would re-allocate tasks accordingly amongst other staff before calling on the resources in other offices or in our Associate network. If there was to be any impact on project progress and deadlines clients would be informed at an early stage to discuss solutions. Depending on the stage the individual project is at, we will re-scope task scheduling and the workplan to minimise disruption.

██████████ as **Commercial Director** of **ekosgen**, is responsible for ensuring that the above protocols are in place. She is supported by **██████████**, Business Support Manager who is the day-to-day liaison with Agile IT on all IT system review and maintenance activity.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Data Protection Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the General Data Protection Regulation ('GDPR')

The General Data Protection Regulation 2016 replaces the EU Data Protection Directive of 1995 and supersedes the laws of individual Member States that were developed in compliance with the Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC. Its purpose is to protect the “rights and freedoms” of natural persons (i.e. living individuals) and to ensure that personal data is not processed without their knowledge, and, wherever possible, that it is processed with their consent.

1.2 Definitions used by the organisation (drawn from the GDPR)

Material scope (Article 2) – the GDPR applies to the processing of personal data wholly or partly by automated means (i.e. by computer) and to the processing other than by automated means of personal data (i.e. paper records) that form part of a filing system or are intended to form part of a filing system.

Territorial scope (Article 3) – the GDPR will apply to all controllers that are established in the EU (European Union) who process the personal data of data subjects, in the context of that establishment. It will also apply to controllers outside of the EU that process personal data in order to offer goods and services, or monitor the behaviour of data subjects who are resident in the EU.

1.3 Article 4 definitions

Establishment – the main establishment of the controller in the EU will be the place in which the controller makes the main decisions as to the purpose and means of its data processing activities. The main establishment of a processor in the EU will be its administrative centre. If a controller is based outside the EU, it will have to appoint a representative in the jurisdiction in which the controller operates to act on behalf of the controller and deal with supervisory authorities.

Personal data – any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person.

Special categories of personal data – personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade-union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation.

Data controller – the natural or legal person, public authority, agency or other body which, alone or jointly with others, determines the purposes and means of the processing of personal data; where the purposes and means of such processing are determined by Union or Member State law, the controller or the specific criteria for its nomination may be provided for by Union or Member State law.

Data subject – any living individual who is the subject of personal data held by an organisation.

Processing – any operation or set of operations which is performed on personal data or on sets of personal data, whether or not by automated means, such as collection, recording, organisation, structuring, storage, adaptation or alteration, retrieval, consultation, use, disclosure by transmission, dissemination or otherwise making available, alignment or combination, restriction, erasure or destruction.

Profiling – is any form of automated processing of personal data intended to evaluate certain personal aspects relating to a natural person, or to analyse or predict that person's performance at work, economic situation, location, health, personal preferences, reliability, or behaviour. This definition is linked to the right of the data subject to object to profiling and a right to be informed about the existence of profiling, of measures based on profiling and the envisaged effects of profiling on the individual.

Personal data breach – a breach of security leading to the accidental, or unlawful, destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data transmitted, stored or otherwise processed. There is an obligation on the controller to report personal data breaches to the supervisory authority and where the breach is likely to adversely affect the personal data or privacy of the data subject.

Data subject consent - means any freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous indication of the data subject's wishes by which he or she, by a statement or by a clear affirmative action, signifies agreement to the processing of personal data.

Child – the GDPR defines a child as anyone under the age of 16 years old, although this may be lowered to 13 by Member State law. The processing of personal data of a child is only lawful if parental or custodian consent has been obtained. The controller shall make reasonable efforts to verify in such cases that consent is given or authorised by the holder of parental responsibility over the child.

Third party – a natural or legal person, public authority, agency or body other than the data subject, controller, processor and persons who, under the direct authority of the controller or processor, are authorised to process personal data.

Filing system – any structured set of personal data which are accessible according to specific criteria, whether centralised, decentralised or dispersed on a functional or geographical basis.

2. Policy statement

- 2.1 The Board of Directors and management of ekosgen, headquartered at 137 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow G2 3 EW and its offices located in Manchester and Sheffield are committed to compliance with all relevant EU and Member State laws in respect of personal data, and the protection of the “rights and freedoms” of individuals whose information ekosgen collects and processes in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- 2.2 Compliance with the GDPR is described by this policy and other relevant policies such as the Information Security Policy, along with connected processes and procedures.
- 2.3 The GDPR and this policy apply to all of ekosgen’s personal data processing functions, including those performed on customers’, clients’, employees’, suppliers’ and partners’ personal data, and any other personal data the organisation processes from any source.
- 2.4 ekosgen has established objectives for data protection and privacy, which are in the GDPR Objectives Record.
- 2.5 The **Data Protection Officer, Lee Williamson** is responsible for reviewing the register of processing annually in the light of any changes to ekosgen’s activities (as determined by changes to the data inventory register and the management review) and to any additional requirements identified by means of data protection impact assessments. This register needs to be available on the supervisory authority’s request.
- 2.6 This policy applies to all employees and interested parties of ekosgen such as outsourced suppliers. Any breach of the GDPR will be dealt with under ekosgen’s disciplinary policy and may also be a criminal offence, in which case the matter will be reported as soon as possible to the appropriate authorities.
- 2.7 Partners and any third parties working with or for ekosgen and who have or may have access to personal data, will be expected to have read, understood and to comply with this policy. No third party may access personal data held by ekosgen without having first entered into a data confidentiality agreement contained within the company’s Contractor’s Agreement which imposes on the third party obligations no less onerous than those to which ekosgen is committed, and which gives ekosgen the right to audit compliance with the agreement.

3. Responsibilities and roles under the General Data Protection Regulation

- 3.1 ekosgen is a data controller and/or data processor under the GDPR.
- 3.2 The Board and all those in managerial or supervisory roles throughout ekosgen are responsible for developing and encouraging good information handling practices within ekosgen; responsibilities are set out in individual job descriptions.
- 3.3 The Data Protection Officer, a role specified in the GDPR, should be a member of the senior management team, is accountable to the Board of Directors of ekosgen for the management of

personal data within ekosgen and for ensuring that compliance with data protection legislation and good practice can be demonstrated. This accountability includes:

- development and implementation of the GDPR as required by this policy; and
 - security and risk management in relation to compliance with the policy.
- 3.4 Lee Williamson, who the Board of Directors considers to be suitably qualified and experienced, has been appointed to take responsibility for ekosgen’s compliance with this policy on a day-to-day basis and, in particular, has direct responsibility for ensuring that ekosgen complies with the GDPR, as do Project Directors in respect of data processing that takes place within their area of responsibility.
- 3.5 The Data Protection Officer has specific responsibilities in respect of procedures such as the Subject Access Request Procedure and are the first point of call for employees/staff seeking clarification on any aspect of data protection compliance.
- 3.6 Compliance with data protection legislation is the responsibility of all employees/staff of ekosgen who process personal data.
- 3.7 ekosgen’s Training Policy sets out specific training and awareness requirements in relation to specific roles and staff of ekosgen generally.
- 3.8 Employees/staff of ekosgen are responsible for ensuring that any personal data about them and supplied by them to ekosgen is accurate and up-to-date.

4. Data protection principles

All processing of personal data must be conducted in accordance with the data protection principles as set out in Article 5 of the GDPR. Ekosgen’s policies and procedures are designed to ensure compliance with the principles.

4.1 Personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly and transparently

Lawful – identify a lawful basis before you can process personal data. These are often referred to as the “conditions for processing”, for example consent.

Fairly – in order for processing to be fair, the data controller has to make certain information available to the data subjects as practicable. This applies whether the personal data was obtained directly from the data subjects or from other sources.

The GDPR has increased requirements about what information should be available to data subjects, which is covered in the ‘Transparency’ requirement.

Transparently – the GDPR includes rules on giving privacy information to data subjects in Articles 12, 13 and 14. These are detailed and specific, placing an emphasis on making privacy notices understandable and accessible. Information must be communicated to the data subject in an intelligible form using clear and plain language.

ekosgen’s Privacy Notice Procedure is available to all staff and contractors.

The specific information that must be provided to the data subject must, as a minimum, include:

- the identity and the contact details of the controller and, if any, of the controller's representative;
- the contact details of the Data Protection Officer, Lee Williamson;
- the purposes of the processing for which the personal data are intended as well as the legal basis for the processing;
- the period for which the personal data will be stored;
- the existence of the rights to request access, rectification, erasure or to object to the processing, and the conditions (or lack of) relating to exercising these rights, such as whether the lawfulness of previous processing will be affected;
- the categories of personal data concerned;
- the recipients or categories of recipients of the personal data, where applicable;
- where applicable, that the controller intends to transfer personal data to a recipient in a third country and the level of protection afforded to the data;
- any further information necessary to guarantee fair processing.

4.2 Personal data can only be collected for specific, explicit and legitimate purposes

Data obtained for specified purposes must not be used for a purpose that differs from those formally notified to the supervisory authority as part of ekosgen’s GDPR register of processing.

Privacy Procedure GDPR DOC 2.1 sets out the relevant procedures.

4.3 Personal data must be adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary for processing

- The Data Protection Officer is responsible for ensuring that ekosgen does not collect information that is not strictly necessary for the purpose for which it is obtained.
 - All data collection forms (electronic or paper-based), including data collection requirements in new information systems, must include a fair processing statement or link to privacy statement and approved by the Data Protection Officer.
 - The Data Protection Officer will ensure that, on an annual basis all data collection methods are reviewed by internal audit to ensure that collected data continues to be adequate, relevant and not excessive.
- 4.4 Personal data must be accurate and kept up to date with every effort to erase or rectify without delay
- Data that is stored by the data controller must be reviewed and updated as necessary. No data should be kept unless it is reasonable to assume that it is accurate.
 - The Data Protection Officer is responsible for ensuring that all staff are trained in the importance of collecting accurate data and maintaining it.
 - It is also the responsibility of the data subject to ensure that data held by ekosgen is accurate and up to date. Completion of a registration or application form by a data subject will include a statement that the data contained therein is accurate at the date of submission.
 - Employees, staff, customers and subcontractors should be required to notify ekosgen of any changes in circumstance to enable personal records to be updated accordingly. Instructions for updating records are contained in Corporate HR files on Virtual Cabinet. It is the responsibility of ekosgen to ensure that any notification regarding change of circumstances is recorded and acted upon.
 - The Data Protection Officer is responsible for ensuring that appropriate procedures and policies are in place to keep personal data accurate and up to date, taking into account the volume of data collected, the speed with which it might change and any other relevant factors.
 - On at least an annual basis, the Data Protection Officer will review the retention dates of all the personal data processed by ekosgen by reference to the data inventory, and will identify any data that is no longer required in the context of the registered purpose. This data will be securely deleted/destroyed in line with the Secure Disposal of Storage Media Procedure.
 - The Data Protection Officer is responsible for responding to requests for rectification from data subjects within one month. This can be extended to a further two months for complex requests. If ekosgen decides not to comply with the request, the Data Protection Officer must respond to the data subject to explain its reasoning and inform them of their right to complain to the supervisory authority and seek judicial remedy.
 - The Data Protection Officer is responsible for making appropriate arrangements that, where third-party organisations may have been passed inaccurate or out-of-date personal data, to inform them that the information is inaccurate and/or out of date and is not to be used to inform decisions about the individuals concerned; and for passing any correction to the personal data to the third party where this is required.
- 4.5 Personal data must be kept in a form such that the data subject can be identified only as long as is necessary for processing.
- Personal data will be retained in line with the Retention of Records Procedure and, once its retention date is passed, it must be securely destroyed as set out in this procedure.
 - The Data Protection Officer must specifically approve any data retention that exceeds the retention periods defined in Retention of Records Procedure (GDPR DOC 2.3), and must ensure that the justification is clearly identified and in line with the requirements of the data protection legislation. This approval must be written.
- 4.6 Personal data must be processed in a manner that ensures the appropriate security
 The Data Protection officer will carry out a risk assessment taking into account all the circumstances of ekosgen’s controlling or processing operations.
 In determining appropriateness, the Data Protection Officer should also consider the extent of possible damage or loss that might be caused to individuals (e.g. staff or customers) if a security breach occurs, the effect of any security breach on ekosgen itself, and any likely reputational damage including the possible loss of customer trust.
 When assessing appropriate technical measures, the Data Protection Officer will consider the following:
- Password protection;
 - Automatic locking of idle terminals;

- Removal of access rights for USB and other memory media;
- Virus checking software and firewalls;
- Role-based access rights including those assigned to temporary staff;
- Encryption of devices that leave the organisations premises such as laptops;
- Security of local and wide area networks;
- Privacy enhancing technologies such as pseudonymisation and anonymisation;

When assessing appropriate organisational measures the Data Protection Officer will consider the following:

- The appropriate training levels throughout ekosgen
- Measures that consider the reliability of employees (such as references etc.);
- The inclusion of data protection in employment contracts;
- Identification of disciplinary action measures for data breaches;
- Monitoring of staff for compliance with relevant security standards;
- Physical access controls to electronic and paper based records;
- Adoption of a clear desk policy;
- Storing of paper based data in lockable fire-proof cabinets;
- Restricting the use of portable electronic devices outside of the workplace;
- Restricting the use of employee's own personal devices being used in the workplace;
- Adopting clear rules about passwords;
- Making regular backups of personal data and storing the media off-site;
- The imposition of contractual obligations on the importing organisations to take appropriate security measures when transferring data outside the EEA.

These controls have been selected on the basis of identified risks to personal data, and the potential for damage or distress to individuals whose data is being processed.

4.7 The controller must be able to demonstrate compliance with the GDPR's other principles (accountability)

The GDPR includes provisions that promote accountability and governance. These complement the GDPR's transparency requirements. The accountability principle in Article 5(2) requires you to demonstrate that you comply with the principles and states explicitly that this is your responsibility.

ekosgen will demonstrate compliance with the data protection principles by implementing data protection policies, adhering to codes of conduct, implementing technical and organisational measures, as well as adopting techniques such as data protection by design, DPIAs, breach notification procedures and incident response plans.

5. Data subjects' rights

5.1 Data subjects have the following rights regarding data processing, and the data that is recorded about them:

- To make subject access requests regarding the nature of information held and to whom it has been disclosed.
- To prevent processing likely to cause damage or distress.
- To prevent processing for purposes of direct marketing.
- To be informed about the mechanics of automated decision-taking process that will significantly affect them.
- To not have significant decisions that will affect them taken solely by automated process.
- To sue for compensation if they suffer damage by any contravention of the GDPR.
- To take action to rectify, block, erased, including the right to be forgotten, or destroy inaccurate data.
- To request the supervisory authority to assess whether any provision of the GDPR has been contravened.
- To have personal data provided to them in a structured, commonly used and machine-readable format, and the right to have that data transmitted to another controller.
- To object to any automated profiling that is occurring without consent.

5.2 ekosgen ensures that data subjects may exercise these rights.

- Data subjects may make data access requests as described in ekosgen Privacy Policy; this procedure also describes how ekosgen will ensure that its response to the data access request complies with the requirements of the GDPR.
- Data subjects have the right to complain to ekosgen related to the processing of their personal data, the handling of a request from a data subject and appeals from a data subject on how complaints have been handled in line with the Complaints Procedure.

6. Consent

- 6.1 ekosgen understands 'consent' to mean that it has been explicitly and freely given, and a specific, informed and unambiguous indication of the data subject's wishes that, by statement or by a clear affirmative action, signifies agreement to the processing of personal data relating to him or her. The data subject can withdraw their consent at any time.
- 6.2 ekosgen understands 'consent' to mean that the data subject has been fully informed of the intended processing and has signified their agreement, while in a fit state of mind to do so and without pressure being exerted upon them. Consent obtained under duress or on the basis of misleading information will not be a valid basis for processing.
- 6.3 There must be some active communication between the parties to demonstrate active consent. All employees/staff are given a copy of ekosgen's Privacy Policy which they must acknowledge acceptance of the provisions therein. Consent cannot be inferred from non-response to a communication. The Controller through diligent record keeping can demonstrate that consent was obtained for the processing operation.
- 6.4 For sensitive data, explicit written consent of data subjects must be obtained unless an alternative legitimate basis for processing exists.
- 6.5 In most instances, consent to process personal and sensitive data is obtained routinely by ekosgen using standard consent documents e.g. when a new client signs a contract, or during induction for participants on programmes.
- 6.6 Where ekosgen provides online services to children, parental or custodial authorisation must be obtained. This requirement applies to children under the age of 16 (unless the Member State has made provision for a lower age limit, which may be no lower than 13).

7. Security of data

- 7.1 All staff are responsible for ensuring that any personal data that ekosgen holds and for which they are responsible, is kept securely and is not under any conditions disclosed to any third party unless that third party has been specifically authorised by ekosgen to receive that information and has entered into a confidentiality agreement.
- 7.2 All personal data should be accessible only to those who need to use it, and access may only be granted in line with the Access Priviledge Policy. All personal data should be treated with the highest security and must be kept:
- in a lockable room with controlled access; and/or
 - in a locked drawer or filing cabinet; and/or
 - if computerised, password protected in line with corporate requirements in the Access Priviledge Policy; and/or
 - stored on (removable) computer media which are encrypted in line with Secure Disposal of Storage Media.
- 7.3 Care must be taken to ensure that PC screens and terminals are not visible except to authorised staff of ekosgen. All staff are required to enter into an Acceptable Use Agreement before they are given access to organisational information of any sort, which details rules on screen time-outs.
- 7.4 Manual records may not be left where they can be accessed by unauthorised personnel and may not be removed from business premises without explicit authorisation.
- 7.5 Personal data may only be deleted or disposed of in line with the Retention of Records Procedure. Manual records that have reached their retention date are to be shredded and disposed of as 'confidential waste'. Hard drives of redundant PCs are to be removed and immediately destroyed as required before disposal.
- 7.6 Processing of personal data 'off-site' presents a potentially greater risk of loss, theft or damage to personal data. Staff must be specifically authorised to process data off-site – see Remote and Mobile Working Policy

8. Disclosure of data

- 8.1 ekosgen must ensure that personal data is not disclosed to unauthorised third parties which includes family members, friends, government bodies, and in certain circumstances, the Police. All staff should exercise caution when asked to disclose personal data held on another individual to a third party. It is important to bear in mind whether or not disclosure of the information is relevant to, and necessary for, the conduct of ekosgen's business.
- 8.2 All requests to provide data for one of these reasons must be supported by appropriate paperwork and all such disclosures must be specifically authorised by the Data Protection Officer.

9. Retention and disposal of data

- 9.1 ekosgen shall not keep personal data in a form that permits identification of data subjects for longer a period than is necessary, in relation to the purpose(s) for which the data was originally collected.
- 9.2 ekosgen may store data for longer periods if the personal data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes, subject to the implementation of appropriate technical and organisational measures to safeguard the rights and freedoms of the data subject.
- 9.3 The retention period for each category of personal data will be set out in the Retention of Records Procedure along with the criteria used to determine this period including any statutory obligations ekosgen has to retain the data.
- 9.4 ekosgen's data retention and data disposal procedures will apply in all cases.
- 9.5 Personal data must be disposed of securely in accordance with the sixth principle of the GDPR – processed in an appropriate manner to maintain security, thereby protecting the “rights and freedoms” of data subjects. Any disposal of data will be done in accordance with the secure disposal procedure.

10. Data transfers

- 10.1 All exports of data from within the European Economic Area (EEA) to non-European Economic Area countries (referred to in the GDPR as “third countries”) are unlawful unless there is an appropriate “level of protection for the fundamental rights of the data subjects”. The nature of ekosgen's business does not involve interaction with customers outside of the UK.

11. Information asset register/data inventory

- 11.1 ekosgen has established a data inventory and data flow process as part of its approach to address risks and opportunities throughout its GDPR compliance project. ekosgen's data inventory and data flow determines:
- business processes that use personal data;
 - source of personal data;
 - volume of data subjects;
 - description of each item of personal data;
 - processing activity;
 - maintains the inventory of data categories of personal data processed;
 - documents the purpose(s) for which each category of personal data is used;
 - recipients, and potential recipients, of the personal data;
 - the role of the Organisation Name throughout the data flow;
 - key systems and repositories;
 - any data transfers; and
 - all retention and disposal requirements.
- 11.2 ekosgen is aware of any risks associated with the processing of particular types of personal data.
- ekosgen assesses the level of risk to individuals associated with the processing of their personal data.
 - ekosgen shall manage any risks identified by a risk assessment in order to reduce the likelihood of a non-conformance with this policy.

- The Data Protection Officer shall, if there are significant concerns, either as to the potential damage or distress, or the quantity of data concerned, escalate the matter to the supervisory authority.

Document Owner and Approval

ekosgen's Data Protection Officer is the owner of this document and is responsible for ensuring that this policy document is reviewed in line with the review requirements stated above.

A current version of this document is available to all members of staff on Virtual Cabinet, published 15 November 2019.

This policy was approved by the Board of Directors on 14 November 2019 and is issued on a version controlled basis under the signature of the Managing Director.

Signature: 

Date: 14/11/19

Change History Record

Issue	Description of Change	Approval	Date of Issue
1	Initial issue	S. Staiano	14/11/19

Appendix 2: Team member CVs

Pamela Reid**Director****Career History**

2007-present	Director, ekosgen
1993-2007	Director, Senior Consultant, Consultant, Blake Stevenson Ltd
1991-1992	Research Consultant, CEI Ltd
1991	Research Assistant, University of Leeds
1990	Research Assistant, University of Strathclyde

Qualifications

BA (Hons) Economics
Chartered Institute of Marketing Diploma in Marketing

Voluntary roles

Vice Chair: With Kids (<http://www.withkids.org.uk>).

With Kids provides individualised support to children and families through Play Therapy. Support is provided to vulnerable children to help them work through emotional difficulties.

Committee Member: ADHD Parent Support West Glasgow

The organisation supports parents and carers of children and young people with an ADHD diagnosis. It provides training, peer support, information sessions and other events along with a youth club and other activities for children and their families.

Pamela has worked in research and consultancy for almost 30 years. She is an expert in strategic review and development, evaluation and equalities. Her work spans policy areas such as skills and education, employability, health and social care, social enterprise development and inclusion. She is expert at designing and implementing innovative and participatory methods. This includes exploring with individuals their attitudes, perceptions and experiences of accessing services and working with service providers to assess the impact of policy and strategy on their provision.

She is expert at developing methodologies that provide a robust and developmental evidence base and taking a structured approach to planning and conducting studies. Throughout her career she has been commissioned to assess impacts of interventions, identify gaps and issues, highlight what works well and why and to provide clients with clear findings to plan future strategies and action plans.

Pam is skilled at working with stakeholder groups, including target beneficiaries to co-design and co-produce solutions Pam is a skilled interviewer with exceptional workshop facilitation skills. She quickly establishes positive and productive working relationships and is an active listener. She brings creativity and rigour to her work and frequently is asked to consider the needs of under-represented groups.

Selected Experience

Neurodiversity in Digital Technology (Skills Development Scotland): She led the multi-disciplinary team that undertook detailed research aimed at understanding how neurodivergent people can be supported throughout the education and skills pipeline, and into and in employment, in high value digital technology occupations. ekosgen established a group of neurodivergent individuals to pilot the research and roll it out. This group co-designed the research and the recommendations, facilitated by our team. We also worked with specialist organisations, policy leads, education providers and employers to explore barriers, attitudes, drivers and enablers. As part of the work we highlighted and developed case studies of example of good and innovative practice to inform future activities. SDS and the research Steering Group fully accepted our recommendations and one quick and very positive outcomes is the establishment of a Neurodiversity Skills Fund, launched by SDS. Our background research included reviewing and analysing policy and central to this was the Autism Strategy for Scotland.

Neurodiversity in Digital Technology Action Plan (Skills Development Scotland): Following on from the research study, Pam was re-commissioned to design and deliver two workshops with neurodiversity stakeholders from the Scottish Government, specialist organisations, service providers and other key organisations to develop an action plan to drive the recommendations of our previous work and improve access to education and employment in digital tech for neurodivergent people in Scotland. The action plan has been accepted by SDS and now has the potential to have significant impact on individuals and organisations, including employers and education providers.

Assessing Progress of the Early Years Skills Strategy and Action Plan (Skills Development Scotland): Pam directed our work to map and assess progress of this strategy to identify what had been achieved, the gaps or areas where progress was more limited and the reasons. We took a systematic approach to this, first by mapping the targets and milestones and then gathering evidence through desk research and follow up consultations. Our work and the recommendations we developed were then used to refresh the strategy and its priorities, put in place robust systems to monitor and drive progress going forward and glean the lessons learnt from the achievements to date.

Evaluation of Working Matters Employability Programme (Glasgow City Council): This three-year evaluation was directed by Pam. WM operates across eight local authority areas and is delivered through a range of models and by a number of delivery partners. It provides holistic and tailored support to ESA claimants who face multiple barriers to employment. WM clients included neurodivergent people including those with an autism diagnosis. The programme and our evaluation recognised that full time employment is not a realistic outcome for all of the participants and so we assessed and measured the outcomes achieved on the journey towards employment including improvements in health and well-being, positive relationships and networks, self-esteem, confidence and ability to sustain tenancies and manage their lives and health. Throughout the research, Pam worked with a cohort of service users to track their experience and progress and co-design changes to the programme in each of the eight areas in response to issue and in order to test new approaches at each stage of the client journey.

Evaluation of the EnterprisingYou Pilot Programme (GMCA): Pam is currently working with GMCA on this test and learn evaluation. EnterprisingYou aims to support vulnerable self-employed people and gig-economy workers through person-centred tailored support built around their personal objectives and needs. As the research progresses, we will be undertaking research with the participants through workshops, surveys, and longitudinal research with a selected cohort. We are producing quarterly insight reports that will be used to understand programme achievements, what is working well, what is less effective and where the approaches being taken need fine-tuned.

Assessing and Developing Innovative Apprenticeship Models (Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland): Pam has been working on this assignment for the last year, to test and learn from pilot models of pre-apprenticeship and shared apprenticeship delivery models. These pilots are being tested in the land-based sector, one in which employers are less likely to engage with the skills system. It is designed to consider the efficacy of these models in removing barriers for employers and apprentices. The apprentices have frequently had a difficult journey through school and these models are designed to be person-centred and enable these young people to progress and reach their potential in a supported environment and through a flexible programme.

Evaluation and Impact of Future Families (Glasgow Life and Clyde Gateway): Pam is leading our study to evaluate the impact of Future Families and inform the development of this flagship programme. It provides early intervention for children aged 0-5 years aimed at tackling inequalities in Glasgow. The activities we are evaluating are in the Clyde Gateway area as part of the Commonwealth Games legacy programme. Our evaluation includes assessing the impact on children and families of the Good Move Wee Play programme aimed at encouraging and supporting families to become more active together. We will be assessing health and well-being impacts and how involvement with the programme encourages wider and more sustained active lifestyles.

Enhancing Diversity in Early Learning and Childcare Workforce (Skills Development Scotland): ekosgen was commissioned to undertake research with individuals and employers to develop approaches to recruiting and retaining a more diverse workforce in this important sector. A key target

group is people who may face barriers to employment through disability and other protected characteristic. We considered the factors, and the tangible and intangible barriers that may cause them to self-exclude, along with the attitudes and perceptions of employers, and the workplace culture in ELC services.

Attitudes and Aspirations of Young People in the Highlands and Islands (Highlands and Islands Enterprise): This work involved a survey of over 3,000 young people to explore their experiences of living in the Highlands and Islands, their attitudes towards it, access to services and opportunities, and their aspirations for the future. It is an important strand of the region's drive to attract and retain young people. The study identified the drivers that make young people want to, or have to, leave, the reasons why young people want to remain in or return to the H&I, and the barriers and challenges they face in socialising, learning, living and working in the region. As well as a region wide report, we produced reports for each local authority area alongside a report specifically focusing on equalities issues.

Formative Evaluation of the Health and Work Pilot (Scottish Government): Pam is the ekosgen Director on this large-scale programme development and evaluation assignment. Two prototypes are being tested in different areas to assess how people with health issues, including mental health, can be supported to remain in the workplace or return to it. Key to the work is regular qualitative consultations and survey work with participants for them to express what works, what gaps there are in the test-programme and wider support ecosystem and to develop longer-term approaches.

Evidence Base of the Skills Gaps and Needs of Health and Social Care (Skills Development Scotland): Pam worked on a major research commission to build a detailed picture of the health and social care workforce and its sub sectors. This was a large-scale piece of research that analysed the current and future skills gaps in this very complex sector. It took account of the changing policy environment, the profile of the workforce and demographic changes in Scotland. We also analysed the pipeline of new entrants including education provision for nursing and allied health professions.

Jeremy Hanks
Senior Consultant



Career History

2019-present Senior Consultant, ekosgen
2015-2019 Consultant, ekosgen
2013-2015 Research Consultant, ekosgen

Qualifications

MA Economic Development
BA (Hons) Economics and Business Management

Jeremy is a highly skilled economic researcher, who has been involved in a number of high profile economic studies, social research pieces, strategy development studies and evaluations throughout Scotland and the UK. Jeremy is highly experienced in undertaking economic research commissions, and has worked extensively for major private sector companies and public sector agencies, such as the Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and Education Scotland. He is an expert in qualitative and quantitative research methods and techniques, and is experienced in reviewing programme monitoring and management information; gathering and analysing socio-economic data; designing research tools for use with a wide range of consultees; consulting with young people, disadvantaged groups, support beneficiaries and key stakeholders; and developing informative and succinct reporting outputs, with clear key messages.

Selected Experience

Neurodiversity and Digital Skills in Scotland (Skills Development Scotland): In 2019/20, Jeremy managed ekosgen's skills research into neurodiversity in the Scottish digital technologies industry. The focus of the study was the link between neurodiverse conditions (autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia) and digital skills. The team completed a literature review on the traits and strengths of the various neurodiverse conditions, and consulted with key stakeholder groups (including Scottish Autism, Scottish Women's Autism Network, Inclusion Scotland and Enable Scotland), key education/training providers and digital employers. It was important that the team also interviewed neurodivergent people who work in the digital technologies industry or are studying digital-related subjects, in order to understand their experience, motivations and any barriers or challenges to progressing into sustained employment.

Neurodiversity and Digital Skills Action Planning Workshop (Skills Development Scotland): Following on from the previous study, ekosgen was retained by SDS in June 2020 to plan and deliver a workshop to inform a neurodiversity and digital skills action plan. The workshop included neurodiversity experts and service providers from the public and private sector. Jeremy and Pamela led the workshop, presenting the findings of the previous research study and facilitated discussions with attendees around six key priorities for supporting neurodivergent individuals into education, training and employment. The actions discussed at the workshop have been taken forward by SDS, including the creation of a neurodiversity skills fund to support training and address skills gaps, with a focus on cyber security.

Review of Scotland's National Tourism Strategy (Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Tourism Alliance): Jeremy was part of the ekosgen team which carried out a review of Tourism Scotland 2020 (TS2020), the national tourism strategy for Scotland in 2019. His main remit was to review monitoring data and progress reports relating to the various tourism assets blocks (priorities), and use published data to illustrate the strategy's progress against various KPIs at national and sub-national levels. Jeremy also consulted with key tourism stakeholder groups to understand progress to date and key priorities for going forward. He liaised with local tourism groups and Destination Management Organisations to promote an online survey to tourism businesses from across Scotland, which achieved hundreds of responses.

Developing a Scottish STEM Evidence Base (Skills Development Scotland): Jeremy also has extensive experience of wider strategy development work through his involvement in the ekosgen team that completed the high profile STEM evidence base. This work fed into the new Scottish Government STEM strategy launched in 2018. As part of the work, Jeremy closely worked with partners (SDS, SFC, Scottish Government, Education Scotland) to develop various definitions of 'STEM' and gather unpublished data. He completed detailed data analysis of participation and attainment in STEM education, and consulted with employers to gather views on the work-readiness of education leavers, and gaps in the skills supply.

Review and Refresh of East Lothian Council Economic Development Strategy (East Lothian Council): Jeremy was part of the ekosgen team which reviewed and updated East Lothian's Economic Development Strategy. This work involved a series of workshops with council staff, business support providers, sector specialists and other key stakeholders. A key part of the strategy was to exploit East Lothian's strength in the food and drink sector, building on the new Food and Drink Innovation Centre located at Queen Margaret University, the 'Scotland's Food and Drink County' branding, and the area's Food and Drink BID. Jeremy completed a socio-economic baselining of the area, using the most up-to-date data sources, and he reviewed key strategies for the area, including the various Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Deal projects.

Implications of National and Local Labour Markets for the Social Care Workforce (Scottish Government): Jeremy was part of the ekosgen team which recently completed a large-scale research study for the Scottish Government which is analysing the workforce movement into, between and out of the Social Care sector in Scotland. Jeremy designed, set up, distributed and promoted a survey which achieved over 10,000 responses from employees and employers in the Social Care sector. Jeremy arranged for the survey to be endorsed and distributed by the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Social Services Council, which helped to maximise participation. This gave the team a very robust dataset from which to draw evidence-based recommendations for the Scottish Government to base workforce planning on.

Young People and the Highlands and Islands: Maximising Opportunities (Highlands and Islands Enterprise): Jeremy was part of the ekosgen team which completed this high profile research study. The team surveyed over 3,100 young people aged 15-30 years to gain their perspectives on the region as a place to live, work and study. Jeremy promoted the survey amongst partners and facilitated an online focus group with young people to explore emerging issues in more detail. The survey covered themes such as youth employability, access to apprenticeships and education provision.

Maximising the Skills of Older Workers (South of Scotland Economic Partnership): Jeremy has a strong knowledge of the challenges faced by disadvantage groups when looking to (re)enter the labour market. This has been developed through recent commissions for the newly formed South of Scotland Economic Partnership. The South of Scotland experiences demographic challenges of outward migration of young people combined with an ageing population. The research has examined ways in which the retaining, retraining and recruiting of older workers can be supported in the region, with specific focus on careers advice and guidance for older people and mentoring for older workers. The study consulted the Centre for Ageing Better and the Manchester Older Workers pilot.

Evaluation of the Youth Employment Scotland (YES) Fund (Scottish Government): While evaluating the Youth Employment Scotland Fund for the Scottish Government, Jeremy contacted employability leads for all 32 local authorities to collate and analyse monitoring and performance data, as well as undertaking more in-depth primary research with young people, employers and local authority delivery staff. He also managed an online survey and Liveminds online discussion forum with young people beneficiaries.

Adam Ferguson
Research Consultant



Qualifications

MRes Human Geography, University of Glasgow
 MA (Hons) Geography, University of Glasgow

Career History

2019-present Research Consultant, ekosgen
 2018-2019 Researcher, SCQF Partnership

Adam joined ekosgen as a Research Consultant in 2019, having worked as a Researcher at the SCQF Partnership. He is a graduate of the University of Glasgow, holding a (BA Hons) in Geography and a Masters in Research in Human Geography, where he developed a range of skills across different research methods and analysis. Adam is skilled at conducting desk-based research, including undertaking extensive literature reviews and picking out relevant messages in line with objectives. Adam has experience undertaking detailed qualitative research and analysis, from inception stage research plans, to the collation/analysis stages including setting up and analysing survey outputs and interview findings. Adam also has significant experience in undertaking strategy and programme evaluations and assessments across a number of sectors.

Selected Experience

Neurodiversity in Tech Research (Skills Development Scotland): Adam was recently part of the ekosgen team engaged in research into neurodiversity in the technology sector in Scotland, doing so on behalf of SDS. The study examined the link between neurodiverse conditions (including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia) and digital skills. As part of the team, Adam wrote an extensive literature review which was informed by analysis of a wide body of literature sourced by the team and key partners. He also oversaw the consultation programme with various stakeholder groups, including Scottish Autism, and consulted with tech employers to understand their experiences of working with neurodivergent people and how to overcome barriers to increase representation. Adam contributed to a report that provided recommendations for the development of wider action plan to increase the participation of under-represented groups in tech.

Research into the Implications of National and Local Labour Markets for the Social Care Workforce (Scottish Government): Adam completed work on behalf of the Scottish Government when he contributed to the creation, development and management of four surveys aimed at social care employers, Personal Assistants and Employers of Personal Assistants as part of research into the implications of national and local labour markets for the social care workforce. These were extensive surveys that collated over 8,000 responses and involved working in collaboration with key partners to garner as many responses as possible. Adam subsequently oversaw the analysis of the data findings from these surveys, drawing out key themes across a variety of indicators and understanding where the surveys were geographically most and least successful. Adam assisted in writing four regional case study papers to support the main report findings, with further data analysis and synthesis of two more extensive workforce surveys crucial to this.

Evaluation of the STEM Professional Learning Grants Programme (Education Scotland): Adam is currently part of the team undertaken research into Education Scotland's STEM Grants Programme, providing an evidence base for the STEM Education and Training Strategy. The work covers multiple years and is high-profile, with the aim of assessing a grants programme that is supporting various projects delivering career-long professional learning (CLPL) to practitioners across the education sector in Scotland. Adam undertook desk research into the projects and developed a framework analysing quantitative elements (i.e. attendance, hours of CLPL and sector). He has also been involved in the development and analysis of two surveys, and is currently undertaking consultations with leads and practitioners involved in two of the projects in order to develop key case studies.

Evaluation of the Land Based Pre-Apprenticeship Pilot Programme (Skills Development Scotland): Adam recently project managed an evaluation the Land Based Pre-Apprentice Pilot Programme on behalf of SDS. The pilot programme was intended to increase work-related opportunities for young people in the agricultural sector by providing placements with farms and skills development through training. Adam oversaw the creation of a monitoring and financial framework designed to track the progress of Pre-Apprentices throughout their placement. He conducted consultations with farm owners/mentors and Pre-Apprentices to explore their experiences, drawing out the successes and challenges of the pilot programme. Adam then analysed and synthesised this information into a report, identifying best practice and informing future instalments of the programme.

Evaluation of the Shared Apprenticeship in Agriculture (Skills Development Scotland): Adam is project managing an evaluation of SDS's Shared Apprenticeship in Agriculture, a model of apprenticeship delivery intended to address market failures in the sector while meeting employer needs and giving young people the opportunity to develop sector-ready skills in a working environment. Adam is conducting consultations with host farms and the apprentices on the programme to explore the delivery model in order to identify the benefits and challenges, skills development and best practice. The final report will be used to inform future incarnations of the model.

Evaluation of Glasgow City Council's Working Matters Programme to Support Participants into Sustainable Employment (Glasgow City Council): Adam was part of the ekosgen team that evaluated the process and outcomes of Glasgow City Council's Working Matters programme, carrying out data analysis and synthesis for the employability project. Drawing on data compiled from interviews with individuals who were part of the project, he developed comparative figures and charts and expanded upon these as part of the final report for Glasgow City Council.

Evaluation of the impact of Scottish Government investment in GPN education and development (NHS Education for Scotland): Adam is currently undertaking work into the impact of programme and support funding for General Practice Nurses (GPNs) in Scotland. This has involved liaising with key partners to establish a body of literature that can be analysed and synthesised into a thorough, succinct literature review. Adam has been involved in the development of research tools, as well as survey design to gather views from practitioners across a range of GPN programmes.

Identification of Best Practice around Maximising the Skills of Older Workers in the South of Scotland (Skills Development Scotland): Adam was part of the team that developed an evidence base on how best to maximise the skills of older workers. This work was particularly focused on approaches in rural contexts, and was an important part of the South of Scotland Regional Skills Investment Plan, launched in July 2019. Adam undertook extensive desk research on sectoral and international comparators to identify best practice approaches that can be applied to older workers in rural areas, and contributed to the report which will be used by SDS to inform future skills planning.

Evaluation of the Strengths and Challenges of East Ayrshire Council's beReady Business Support Programme (East Ayrshire Council): Adam was part of the ekosgen team engaged in evaluating the effectiveness of a business support programme developed and implemented by East Ayrshire Council (EAC). Adam conducted a number of consultations with business directors and managers who had participated in the programme, drawing out themes that were subsequently incorporated into a report for EAC. Adam also created and maintained upkeep of a consultation tracker for the entire ekosgen team to ensure sufficient oversight and planning of the consultation process. He also assisted in the development of an online survey sent out to businesses, analysing responses and drawing out key findings to address the objectives set out by the client.

Development of a Blue Economy Strategic Action Plan for North Ayrshire (North Ayrshire Council): Adam is currently part of the ekosgen team developing a strategic action plan around maximising opportunities in the Blue Economy sector across North Ayrshire. Adam undertook extensive baselining analysis across the sector, drawing on various national and regional policies, documentation and data sources to understand local area and wider sectoral landscape. This will inform the development of a strategic action plan intended to identify sustainable opportunities in the sector.

Claire Boyle
Research Consultant



Career History

March 2020-present Senior Consultant, ekosgen
 Sept 2019-March 2020 GIS Data Investigator, Scottish Power
 June 2018-Aug 2018 Economic Development Intern, ScotRail

Qualifications

MA (Hons) Geography, University of Dundee

Claire recently joined ekosgen as a Research Consultant having worked as a data investigator at Scottish Power and in the economic development team at ScotRail. She holds a first class MA (Hons) Geography where she developed a skills across a myriad of research methods and analysis, combined with a deep understanding of society and environment. Claire is skilled at conducting desk-based research, undertaking structured and comprehensive literature reviews and distilling out the key messages in line with study objectives. She has experience of developing research proposals, facilitating surveys online and in field, conducting interviews and analysing/collating data and presenting findings in a comprehensive report of presentation.

Selected Experience

Neurodiversity in Digital Technology (Skills Development Scotland): Claire worked to support her team in undertaking research aimed at understanding how neurodivergent people can be supported throughout the education and skills pipeline, and into employment in digital technology occupations. She organised and helped coordinate a workshop with specialist organisations to explore opportunities to overcome employment barriers, as found in previous ekosgen research.

Evaluating the impact of professional learning in STEM (Education Scotland): Claire was part of the ekosgen team which evaluated the process and outcomes of the Scottish Government's STEM Education and Training Strategy on practitioners, young people and families. She carried out desk-research into relevant policy documents and past research, and undertook data analysis from online surveys to develop comparative figures and charts for expansion in the final report.

IRES Baseline Mapping (Capital City Partnership): Claire worked with the ekosgen team in a baseline mapping and monitoring and evaluation exercise of the Integrated Regional Employability and Skills (IRES) programme. The £25 million programme has a particular focus on retaining people in the region through providing up-skilling and employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups. Claire contributed to working out the best way to deliver, monitor and evaluate the programme through extensive desk research of business cases on the projects within the programme and identifying key data gaps and sources.

Evaluation of the EnterprisingYou Pilot Programme (GMCA): Claire is currently working with GMCA on a test and learn evaluation, EnterprisingYou. It aims to support vulnerable, self-employed people and gig-economy workers through person-centred approaches built around their personal objectives and needs. Claire is undertaking detailed analysis of the results from extensive surveys that have been taken at key stages in the study timeline. This will be used to inform quarterly insight reports to understand programme achievements, highlight any challenges and areas that can be developed.

Development of a Blue Economy Strategic Action Plan for North Ayrshire (North Ayrshire Council): Claire is currently part of the ekosgen team developing a strategic action plan around maximising opportunities in the Blue Economy sector across North Ayrshire. On behalf of North Ayrshire Council, Claire has undertaken extensive desk research across the sector, drawing on various documentation and data sources, coupled with arranging consultations with key stakeholders. This will inform the development of a strategic action plan intended to identify sustainable opportunities in the sector.

Evaluation of the impact of Scottish Government investment in GPN education and development (NHS Education for Scotland): Claire is part of the team undertaking work into the impact of programme and support funding for General Practice Nurses (GPN) in Scotland. She has

overseen the consultation programme set-up, to understand the experience of key stakeholders and partners. Further, this has involved the development and promotion of surveys aimed at different audiences to get a wide range of responses to provide robust findings on the programme impact.

Integrated transport uses and routes for UWS students/staff (ScotRail): Claire conducted in-depth analysis on multiple surveys completed to understand the journey students and staff take to access the University of the West of Scotland prior to a location change and the experience they have when travelling. This involved collating data into relevant coding frameworks and charts to display information in a cohesive way, pulling together data from the variety of sources to predict changes in transportation use and in turn, the affect this will have on train operations.

Appendix 3: Form of tender

SCHEDULE 7 - FORM OF TENDER TO THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

We the undersigned do hereby contract and agree on the acceptance of the Tender by the Scottish Ministers, to provide the services in the Specification of Requirements (Schedule 2) in accordance with the Schedules, at the prices entered in the Commercial Proposal (Schedule 5) and in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of Contract (Schedule 8) which appear in this set of documents.

We the undersigned undertake to submit a tender in accordance with the following documents:

- **SCHEDULE 1** **Instructions for Tenderers**
- **SCHEDULE 2** **Specification**
- **SCHEDULE 3** **Evaluation Guide and Instructions**
- **SCHEDULE 4** **Quality Questions**
- **SCHEDULE 5** **Pricing Schedule**
- **SCHEDULE 6** **PO and Invoicing Requirements**
- **SCHEDULE 7** **Form of Tender**
- **SCHEDULE 8** **Scottish Government Terms & Conditions of Contract**

We agree to abide by this tender from 17 July 2020, the date fixed for receiving tenders, until the Award of Contract.

We understand that the Scottish Ministers are not bound to accept the lowest or any tender and shall not be bound to use the Contractor as a sole supplier.

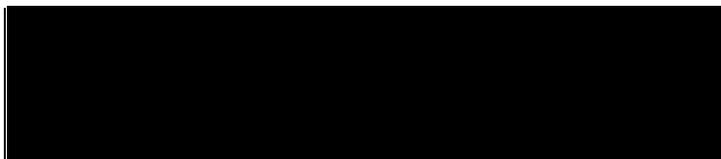
We understand that the service provision is expected to commence 28 August 2020 and end not later than 31 March 2021, **with option to extend for one month unless** the Contract is terminated in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of Contract of this Invitation to Tender (ITT) document.

We understand that the Scottish Ministers are not bound to accept this or any Tender for this project, however, any contract that may result from this Tender will be subject to Scots Law and the Tenderer hereby irrevocably submits to the jurisdiction of the Scottish Courts.

We agree that this Tender remains open for consideration for 3 months from the date fixed for receiving Tenders.

By submitting a Tender, we acknowledge that our Tender is a bona fide Tender, intended to be competitive, and that we have not fixed or adjusted the amount of the Tender by or under or in accordance with any agreement or arrangement with any other person.

Signature



Name:

SUSAN STAIANO

(BLOCK CAPITALS)

Designation

DIRECTOR

Duly authorised to sign Tenders for and on behalf of:

Name of
Tenderer

EKOSGEN

Address

4TH FLOOR, 137 SAUCHIEHALL STREET, GLASGOW
G2 3EW

Telephone
No

0845 120 6244

INCLUDE AREA CODE

Date

14/07/20

