Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2023

Mainstreaming Equality in Scottish Government Agencies

Contents

1.   Introduction

We are continuing to take action to further Scotland's position as a global leader in human rights and equality. Our ambition is for strong communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe, and where human rights are respected. We will continue to take action to mainstream equality and human rights and take forward specific actions to address discrimination.

This report sets out the continuing progress that Scottish Government Agencies are making to mainstream equality and human rights throughout their policies and practices.

The information below is provided directly by the Agencies. Education Scotland, the Scottish Prison Service, and Social Security Scotland publish their reports independently.

2.   Accountant in Bankruptcy (AiB)

Learning, Development and Staff Performance Management

1. Equality and fairness are an integral part of AiB's day-to-day working. The Organisational Development Team deliver mandatory equality and fairness training as part of their induction session. AiB staff have access to Scottish Government's e-learning portal which offers webinars and e-learning on topics including emotional intelligence, unconscious bias, and vulnerability.

2. AiB's Leadership Team fully respect the diverse needs of staff. Following the easing of COVID restrictions AiB introduced hybrid working arrangements. Most of the staff work from home for 60% of their contracted hours, and 40% in the office. The hybrid model supports a flexible solution to meet the needs of individual dependencies for example, caring responsibilities and other flexible working requirements. As a result, we can build effective teams, keep morale high, and prevent isolation among staff.

3. The Organisational Development Team have provided staff with useful resources and awareness articles to ensure staff are aware of their own rights and have insight to the diverse values and beliefs of our workforce, encouraging tolerance and respect. To support staff emotionally and physically, additional sessions have been provided promoting mental health awareness, financial empowerment and physical/mental health benefits attributed to volunteering.

4. AiB have fourteen staff members who have completed mental health first aid training and are trained in basic intervention skills and can support those with mental health issues. If staff have any concerns about a colleague or a family member and are looking for advice on how best to approach the situation, they can contact one of the trained mental health first aiders for advice.

Equality Outcomes

Social Responsibility

5. Skills4bills is a project where employees of Accountant in Bankruptcy volunteer to visit local primary schools to show pupils, aged 10-11, how to be financially savvy. This is done through a game called Skills4bills which is primarily delivered to local schools on an ad hoc basis. These sessions are delivered in conjunction with other financial education initiatives run by the schools with a view to firmly establish an understanding of financial awareness.

6. AiB support Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and North Ayrshire School Campus to help to grow and develop our local young people into our future workforce. We host classroom sessions and support career fairs for young people to help them understand and develop the skills they need to succeed and promote career opportunities available to them both at AiB and the wider Scottish Government.

7. Since 2017 AiB have run the Developing Young Workers Programme over the summer in support of Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy. This provides a solution to increased staff leave during the summer holiday period whilst supporting the development of young people in the local community to gain vital skills to help them on the road to their chosen careers. In October 2022 we were received **The Future Stars Champion award** at The Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce Business Awards 2022.

8. Our doors are always open to fresh talent whether it be internally or through the Modern Apprenticeship programmes. Since January 2021, the Agency has recruited thirteen modern apprentices who perform a range of roles. To ensure that they complete their apprenticeship successfully, line managers create personal development plans based on the individual's needs and work with AiB's Organisational Team to identify learning initiatives to ensure they are upskilled, motivated to learn, and acquire new skills.

Corporate Parenting

9. AiB is fully supportive of Scottish Ministers in their role as Corporate Parents and we embrace the values and responsibilities which corporate parenting represents. AiB's Corporate Parenting Plan was published in line with legislative requirements. Although AiB does not have direct involvement in providing services solely for care experienced young people, we support this vulnerable group through our recruitment opportunities. One of the actions taken is to guarantee an interview to any care-experienced young people applying for work experience at AiB through the Developing the Young Workforce scheme.

10. As the Agency deals with people who are experiencing financial difficulty, AiB's Vulnerable Person Policy sets out how AiB will identify and support debtors who may be vulnerable and in need of support. The policy was drafted in consultation with team leaders, internal customer service, the senior management team, input, and requests through the Advisory Board (representing debtors, creditors, third sector and private money advice) as well as feedback from the Money Advice Trust and mental health specialists. We deliver vulnerability training to support operational members of staff who regularly deal with vulnerable customers and may experience threats of violence or suicide to provide them with the skills to understand and empathise with the plight of these customers.

Access to information and services

11. AiB responds quickly to any requests for information in alternative languages and formats to ensure that there are no barriers to accessing information and services. All publications are available on request, in community language versions and alternative formats.

12. AiB is responsible for the administration of its main customer facing website. To ensure compatibility with accessibility standards across all devices, project work is underway to develop a new web presence which will replace the existing site in 2023. In the meantime, we are working to ensure that any added content to the existing website complies, as far as possible, with accessibility standards.

Procurement

13. Where possible, the Agency uses the Scottish Government supported business framework. A supported factory/business is "an establishment where more than 30% of the workers are disabled persons who by reason of the nature or severity of their disability are unable to take up work in the open labour market". Supported factories and businesses have a valuable role in assisting people with disabilities to integrate into the labour market and in helping to improve their overall independence and wellbeing, which is crucial in building a healthier and fairer Scotland. The most recent example includes the purchase of new furniture and technical gear, including an induction loop, for our conference and meeting rooms.

Policy

14. As the Agency develops its policies, we consider the impact they will have on people. AiB carries out Equality Impact Assessments which helps us consider equality issues, in particular the impact and barriers on people who share 'protected characteristics' i.e., age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race and religion or belief. Each assessment is unique to each policy.

15. An [Equality Monitoring Form](#) is including with the Debtor Application pack.

16. At present, the Agency asks applicants applying for bankruptcy a range of diversity questions. The Agency is currently reviewing the information it collates and determining whether it continues to be appropriate to collect this very limited information.

3. Disclosure Scotland (DS)

1. Disclosure Scotland is actively involved in considering equal opportunities in both our internal and external activities. DS25, our Corporate Strategy, sets out this commitment clearly. This strategy looks forward, consistently asking how we can:

   - give the best possible service to employers and our customers
   - contribute to the wider purpose of the Scottish Government and help our Ministers deliver their plan for Scotland
   - play a better part in the network of agencies and organisations that aim to make Scotland safer, while also helping employers use our service in a more informed and evidence-led way
   - operate Scotland's National Barring Service to prevent harm to those who are vulnerable
   - work in a way that shows fairness, kindness and compassion in equal measure

2. We help Scotland flourish and become a safer, more inclusive place to live. We make communities safer by making sure unsuitable people do not work with those who are vulnerable. We contribute to inclusive and fair recruitment, helping employers make informed decisions. We do this through our three important functions: Disclose, Protect and Promote.

3. We have continued to focus on inclusiveness and valuing difference, particularly in light of the ongoing impact coronavirus has had on our colleagues, and with the implementation of a hybrid working pilot scheme. Managers have carried out hybrid working conversations with their colleagues to understand the impact the changes have had on our lived experience, whether working remotely or in the office. These conversations consider protected characteristics and any other factors which may hinder hybrid working being inclusive.

4. At our Board away day in July 2022, an interactive session was held on Equality and Diversity. A representative from Equality and Human Rights Commission delivered a presentation to our Board Members and Leadership Team. This prompted discussions on an Equality Strategy for Disclosure Scotland and the importance of carrying out Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA).

5. Disclosure Scotland has pledged to follow the Race Equality recommendations made by Scottish Parliament to the public sector. We have a Race Equality Action Plan which is continually being developed and updated; this will form part of our wider Equality Strategy we are developing in 2023. Feeding into this, we are also an active member of the Scottish Delivery Body Working Group on Race

Equality which fed out of this work. This meets every two months and has a number of key actions being taken forward.

User research

6. User research has been carried out with a cross section of users of the service and continues as we make improvements and move towards changes to accommodate the Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020. This new legislation focuses on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, while balancing the need for people with convictions to move on from past convictions and contribute to society. The reforms in the Act were developed through extensive consultation with stakeholders. Plans involve engagement with marginalised users such as those with conviction information will happen prior to commencement as aligned to DS25.

7. In August 2021, Disclosure Scotland established a Stakeholder Engagement Group, devising the membership from a wide range of stakeholders to ensure different perspectives help to shape future design and delivery of our services as we implement the Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020. For example, group members include organisations representing care experienced people, those in secure care, people with convictions and disabled employers. Disclosure Scotland also has an internal Stakeholder Engagement and Social Mission group, which looks at how we can improve our services to customers and which delivers the 'Social Impact Pledge'.

Service delivery

8. During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the education provided by Disclosure Scotland to our customers moved online. However, with COVID-19 restrictions now eased, Disclosure Scotland are planning to move into a period where this service is available both online and in person. This should provide fairer opportunities to access this service for groups with whom it has been more difficult to engage in an online setting.

9. During COVID-19, there has been a clear move to digital applications. Disclosure Scotland has been consistently providing an assisted digital route to applying for all disclosure levels. This will also be included in any future service development.

10. In the last 12 months, engagement has been undertaken to simplify guidance in complex areas of our services in order to make it easier to understand. This included carrying out user research with individuals under consideration for listing, which is feedback from a customer group Disclosure Scotland seldom hear. Our online services have been designed and delivered to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1AA accessibility standard. An accessibility audit was

carried out prior to going live with PVG online to ensure compliance. All of our corporate publications are now working towards the Plain English Standard which promotes accessibility of our information.

Policy

11. In our role as a policymaker and service provider, we have collaborated with equality communities and communities of interest to meet the aspirations of a fairer, more equal society.

12. In the past year we carried out an equality impact assessment to inform our response to the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme. This EQIA related to two sets of regulations that were urgently brought forward to ensure that requests could be made for enhanced disclosures with suitability information in relation to children and protected adults, in respect of individuals who are offering to provide accommodation (and those individuals over the age of 16 years where they, and the individual offering the accommodation, reside within the accommodation to be provided) to displaced Ukrainians under the UK Government's Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

13. In our policymaker and service provider role, we have a Disclosure Scotland Corporate Parenting Plan, this involves working with care experienced people to gain an understanding of their needs to ensure our services are relevant and accessible.

Procurement

14. Through our procurement activities, we contribute to inclusive growth and local economic wellbeing by:
    - incorporating community benefits into our contracts where possible which provide training and employment opportunities along with other community enhancements
    - advancing the use of Fair Work practices through procurement; opportunities for SMEs, the third sector and supported businesses
    - taking actions to address the climate emergency
    - compliance with the Equality Act built into terms and conditions

Support for local communities

15. Disclosure Scotland are committed to making a positive impact on the local communities in which we operate. Disclosure Scotland continues to support the 'Social Impact Pledge', a Scottish Government initiative aimed at increasing the social impact of public sector organisations across Scotland.

16. Disclosure Scotland have colleagues participating in the mutual mentoring programme, both as mentors and mentees, the Care Experienced Internship programme and kickstart scheme which helps create new jobs for those at risk of long-term unemployment. Disclosure Scotland also employs colleagues under the Modern Apprenticeship scheme. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Disclosure Scotland were unable to be involved in the Career Ready programme over the last two years. This programme provides students from lower income families with the confidence, skills, and network to achieve their potential by providing mentoring opportunities and a four-week internship for pupils in fifth and sixth year. We are however looking to restart our involvement in the near future. We are currently engaging with the Going Forward into Employment Veteran Scheme to scope out how we can work with them to recruit into posts with Disclosure Scotland.

Our people

17. Disclosure Scotland uses equality and diversity information provided via the eHR system and analyses data provided by the Corporate Services Analytical Team in Scottish Government to inform decisions. Colleagues are regularly encouraged to complete their diversity information on the eHR system, and this will be further encouraged with the Equality and Diversity Strategy planned for 2023.

18. All vacancies and temporary responsibility supplement opportunities are advertised internally first, providing opportunities for colleagues within Disclosure Scotland to progress in their career.

19. A Strategic Workforce Planning Group was established in July 2022. Part of the remit of this group is to monitor and report on workforce data including information on protected characteristics and to look at areas for improvement, for example encouraging job applications from under-represented groups.

20. Colleagues have been asked to complete inclusiveness training provided by the Scottish Government over the last year. Inclusive culture for colleagues and managers is now a mandatory training requirement, as is inclusive recruitment for those who are on interview selection panels.

    All colleagues are also required to have at least one diversity and inclusion objective as part of their annual appraisal, guidance on this has been recently published. Diversity and inclusion objectives are a way individuals at all levels can set themselves clear actions they will take over the year to promote and drive areas of equality across the organisation.

21. Disclosure Scotland have an internal People Engagement and Communications Network Group. This is geared towards improving engagement with all

colleagues across the organisation and providing an inclusive workplace and culture.

Summary

22. This report outlines the progress Disclosure Scotland has made towards Scottish Government equality outcomes. It also underlines our ongoing commitment to mainstreaming equality by reducing discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and inclusiveness both within Disclosure Scotland and in the wider community.

4.   Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA)

1. In line with Scottish Governments objectives, Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA) are aiming that by 2025 our workforce will have increased in diversity to reflect the population and that our workforce culture will be more inclusive with colleagues from all backgrounds, characteristics and experiences reporting that they feel more valued.

Updating Personal Data

2. We are encouraging colleagues to fill in their eHR diversity data as part of the SPPA Induction process and via annual all staff emails and line manager guidance.

Mandatory Objective (all staff)

3. We have introduced a new Mandatory Objective for all staff across SPPA. Be part of building a more equitable, diverse and inclusive SPPA for colleagues and customers:
    - Role model values and fair treatment of others at all times;
    - Take an inclusive approach to flexible working, recognising different working patterns and circumstances;
    - Raise awareness of equality, diversity and inclusivity by attending training, sharing learning and promoting team development; and
    - Develop awareness of accessibility matters and make tangible improvements for our colleagues and customers.

Mandatory Learning Course

4. To feed into developing and deepening our understanding there are two mandatory courses provided through the new Pathways Portal.

    - Inclusive Culture - for those without line manager responsibility; and
    - Inclusive Leadership and Culture - for those colleagues with line manager responsibility.

5. These were due to be fully completed by end July 2022, with all Line Managers having sight of their direct reports' attendance.

Career Ready Internship Programme

6. Mentoring three young people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Training Events

7. We try to ensure that all colleagues have access to learning events by offer a range of delivery methods – face to face, online, SG Pathway and CSL Portals, via Teams etc.

8. All scheduled events tend to be delivered were possible mid-week, between school hours to allow most colleagues to attend.

Personal Development / Opportunities

9. All colleagues have regular monthly conversations with their line managers that also covers aspirations and personal development – all colleagues can apply for SPPA and SG vacancies, Secondments and TRS opportunities.

Raising colleague awareness – dedicated SharePoint Site

10. Introduced a new SharePoint site shared between 2 of our core People Priorities, Health and Wellbeing and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

11. Here we share articles, information about links to wider colleague groups. This is an important resource to overcome isolation when we have a relatively small headcount and a rural location.

12. We have a calendar of invited speakers who will share their experiences with colleagues.

Recruitment Process Review

13. We are reviewing our recruitment documentation to make sure it is as inclusive as possible and to underline our commitment to making all reasonable adjustments to ensure that no prospective applicants are disadvantaged.

SPPA Internet Pages

14. We are about to add pages to our public website about working at the SPPA and these will feature our commitments to a healthy and inclusive working environment.

5.   Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)

The Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) is an executive agency of the Scottish Government and responsible for assessing and paying student awards for Scottish domiciled students in Higher Education throughout the UK. We administer budgets of over £1billion each year, making payments to both educational institutions and over 190,000 students a year. We are committed to recruiting a diverse workforce representative of the clients we serve.

In 2020, SAAS set out its new Corporate Plan for 2020-25, which reflected the agency's high-level ambitions and vision for the next five years. The commitments in this plan will continue to use technology and innovation to improve services and to provide more targeted support for vulnerable and disadvantaged students. This is reinforced by our SAAS Corporate Values of People First, Inclusive and Enabling and Quality and Excellence that remain at the heart of everything we do and underpin our purpose of enabling all students to fulfil their potential.

Access to Information and Services

1. In line with the Programme for Government commitments on widening access, we introduced the Operations Specialist Support Team, who are responsible for dealing with students who need additional support and/or have complex backgrounds. This includes care experienced and estranged students and those with a complicated residency history. The team provide comprehensive help and support to these students throughout their learner journey.

2. Digital strategy and the delivery of digital services are underpinned by clear and robust digital design and development principles that privilege equality, diversity and inclusion. These principles drive the development of systems that support an inclusive and diverse workforce and universal accessibility to our public digital services. Examples of our successful in-house project delivery are:

    - A digital service to deliver Part-Time funding (PTFG) which include a digital provider verification process.
    - The launch of an improved SAAS website focussing on improved accessibility standards.
    - The introduction and development of the Student Information Scotland website, built on Digital First principles, which is maintained on an ongoing basis by SAAS. The website complies with accessibility standards, was comprehensively tested with a range of students with different abilities and built mobile first in order to be accessed on all devices.

3. As enhanced funding packages continue to be introduced for disadvantaged groups, SAAS will continue to support widening access ambitions. In order to meet challenges and to embrace new opportunities, SAAS' commitment to the declaration against racism, also endorsed by the Scottish Funding Council and Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, reflect SAAS' approach against racism in Scotland's Universities. As an employer we will continue to consider equality, diversity and inclusion in future job postings.

4. SAAS recently redesigned its Funding Guide, which provides an accompanying suite of British Sign Language (BSL) and subtitled videos on its website, working closely with Deaf Action throughout. Taking account of the current COVID crisis, SAAS has also developed a COVID-19 British Sign Language and subtitled video; hosted on the SAAS website.

Policy

5. In 2021, SAAS created 'SAAS Cares' as part of our strategy to improve our internal communications and develop staff awareness and engagement. SAAS Cares encompasses all key activities and projects to support potentially vulnerable students or students who may have traditionally had difficulties accessing/engaging with public services due to a protected characteristic.

6. The aim was to promote and celebrate the meaningful and impactful work that SAAS contributes to, for students who require additional support as well as giving staff an opportunity to influence this work.

7. As part of this work, we formed the SAAS Cares Action Group, which is comprised of staff members from across the Agency. The group meet regularly to discuss new ideas, share information and consider current processes and policy changes that could contribute to a positive experience for these student groups. The group also acts as the governance for ensuring actions contained within our published Corporate Parenting Plan are progressed.

8. As part of SAAS Cares, SAAS has developed new internal guidance to support vulnerable customers when interacting with the Agency. This includes but is not limited to customers with disabilities, who are in financial distress, distress with their mental health, are care experienced, estranged or transgender. The guidance signposts staff on what to do in certain situations and provides details of support services that they can direct customers too. It also recognises the impact that some interactions can have on individual staff members and provides details of the support available to them.

9. As noted in 2021, SAAS led on a review of disability related student support in Further and Higher Education on behalf of the Scottish Government. Over the

last two years, the Agency has been implementing recommendations in relation to Higher Education including improved information/guidance and the introduction of an online application system for students applying for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) that is expected to launch during the course of the 2023/24 Academic Year (AY).

10. Since the last update, SAAS have been working alongside colleagues in the Scottish Government on a consolidation exercise regarding student financial support. As part of this work, equality impact assessments were undertaken in relation to policy changes contained within the regulations including the increase to the age cap in which students can access student loans. The regulations were laid before the Scottish Parliament in May 2022 and came into force on 1 August 2022.

11. SAAS continues to work closely with stakeholder groups and arranged in early 2022 for the Hub for Success who provide advice and guidance to Care Experienced students to get into, stay in and return to Higher Education to provide awareness sessions to staff across the Agency.

12. In line with Programme for Government (PfG) commitments, SAAS also worked with colleagues in the Scottish Government to implement a new payment option for HE students in receipt of the Care Experienced Bursary (CEB) from 2022/2023 AY.

13. We have also been working with Scottish Government colleagues to support the delivery of the PfG commitment to improve the support available to estranged students.

14. Scottish Government have commissioned a data gathering exercise to understand more about the experiences of, and available evidence on, estranged students in Further and Higher Education in Scotland. The final report will publish in late 2022.

Organisational Culture and Learning and Development

15. SAAS identified Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) as high priority and significant progress has been made in this area. A particular focus has been to measure diversity and inclusion across SAAS, to improve and understand difference across our workforce and to retain and attract a range of people.

16. A SAAS EDI forum was established at the end of 2020. A programme for this forum has been established, where a variety of topics have been explored to upskill staff and provide them with improved awareness and educate them on

EDI issues which have included identity and belonging, inclusion and culture and neurodiversity.

17. A SAAS EDI webpage has been created to reflect our responsibilities and provide information related resources. SAAS have strengthened their induction and recruitment processes, which have been subject to extensive review to collectively reinforce EDI and align this with our Corporate and People strategy.

18. In July 2022, SAAS launched their EDI strategy and action plan, which was a collaboration between SAAS colleagues and Scottish Government and is living proof of the direction for the organisation. Our EDI strategy 2021-25 aligns with and supports other SAAS people-related aims, objectives and priorities including our People Strategy (published in 2021), Wellbeing Strategy and Living our Values – currently in development.   Our EDI strategy focusses on outputs across three main areas:

Understanding our Workforce:
- Consistently use inclusive language / terminology and best practice approaches across all recruitment activity.
- Attract and retain staff through a focus on staff engagement, inclusive working practices and support/resources that facilitate career development opportunities for all staff.
- Develop a sense of community amongst colleagues, where we support each other and share information, ideas and resources in relation to EDI activities and initiatives.

Inclusive Culture:
- Support, resources and opportunities are available to enhance deeper awareness and understanding of EDI matters.

Leadership and Management:
- Managers have the right skills, ability and experience to perform their duties to the highest standard and deliver SAAS priorities.
- Opportunities are created and developed for employees to embed and promote shared vision and inclusive working culture.
- SAAS Executive and Senior Management Team to be actively involved and encourage collaboration, buy-in and commitment to EDI matters and the EDI forum.
- EDI is understood and valued across our workforce with policies and objectives in place that support the inclusive culture and behaviours expected and required of everyone in SAAS.

19. To ensure the continuity of diversity and equality training, SAAS colleagues participated in mandatory training for Inclusive Culture commissioned via the Scottish Government. SAAS provided resource to support this wider roll out which resulted in an active collaboration and learning for their own staff.

20. Diverse ranges of SAAS staff were given the opportunity to volunteer and participate in a Staff Engagement Session to recruit the SAAS Chief Executive. Collectively they worked as a cohort and co-created questions and a criteria based on the information available to them to support the decision making process. This experience was new to many junior staff who have now had the opportunity to expand their knowledge and understanding of how a fair and open Senior Civil Service process works to ensure everyone has a considered experience.

21. SAAS continue to promote its Learning and Development model which encourages 'just in time' learning. As well as incorporating more thorough Diversity and Inclusion themes into Induction, a number of Organisational, Learning and Development activities and initiatives have been implemented during 2022 that align with both the People and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategies. This includes the activation of a SAAS tile on the SG new Pathways platform where we now have a tile to promote SAAS learning and development, including SAAS specific equality, diversity and inclusion learning resources.

Corporate Social Responsibility

22. SAAS continue to promote the Young Scotland Programme and have supported and provided funding for staff to attend the programme.

23. Linked to the SAAS Corporate values which puts customers and staff at the centre of everything we do, SAAS celebrated and recognised staff achievements through its staff awards in November 2022. This was a great opportunity for staff to nominate each other and acknowledge the continued effort of individual colleagues and teams, being fully inclusive to all staff at all grades.

24. SAAS were delighted to be awarded Investors in People again in March 2020 following on from its initial accreditation three years prior.

Wellbeing and Support

25. SAAS have developed a Wellbeing Strategy, which aligns with and supports our other people-related priorities, including our EDI strategy.

26. SAAS has launched the Employee Passport, a framework for staff to support a discussion with their line manager to help identify barriers and possible

adjustments, to all SAAS colleagues. The purpose of the Employee Passport is to help create an inclusive and supportive environment allowing people to perform at their best at work.

27. The SAAS People and Performance team provide advice, guidance, support and coaching to all staff. Coaching has enabled line managers to help think about how they get the best from those they manage whilst also handling often sensitive and challenging situations as well as managing complex long term sick absences.

28. SAAS has its own dedicated Mental Health First Aider group. The group meet quarterly and provide updates/refresher news articles, e.g. for 2022 Mental Health Awareness Week.

Resourcing

29. In line with Scottish Government Policies and the Civil Service Recruitment Principles, SAAS are committed to the Disability Confident Employer Scheme.

30. SAAS have supported the development of students by offering summer placement opportunities within the organisation through a fair and open contract. This means should they wish to remain and develop a career in SAAS the option is there to retain them permanently.

31. The Scottish Government have recognised that the qualification element for external campaigns restrict applications from experienced candidates. As a result this has been removed as an eligibility criteria from adverts where possible, ensuring the focus is on key skills and experience.

32. SAAS invested in a 2021 pilot of 'Grow Your Own' placement which offered career development opportunities for staff wishing to move from one area of the organisation into another and a change of career direction. This reduced reliance on temporary staff and suspended recruitment challenges and provided a career pathway for existing staff to access career opportunities into a profession, which they may not have chosen. The next steps is to formalise this approach and develop a programme.

6. Transport Scotland

Strategy

1. In February 2020, Transport Scotland published the second National Transport Strategy *(NTS)* setting out our vision for a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system, helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors. It set out the four key priorities to support that vision: Reduces Inequalities; Takes Climate Action; Helps Deliver Inclusive Economic Growth; and Improves our Health and Wellbeing. Within these priorities, there is a greater focus on Reducing Inequalities and Taking Climate Action to ensure we address the key challenges we face.

2. The NTS recognises the key role transport plays in enabling people to realise their human rights. It is an essential requirement in enabling people to realise other human rights such as the right to education, the right to work, the right to take part in cultural and public life, and the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The Strategy also sets out the impact transport has in helping people across Scotland move out of poverty and our vision for transport in Scotland will help households access employment, training and education - supporting an increase in earned incomes - and by being affordable will help to reduce overall household costs.

3. The second NTS Delivery Plan was published in June 2022, which sets out the actions being taken across the Scottish Government to deliver our vision, priorities and outcomes for 2022 and 2023. As with the first Delivery Plan, published in 2020, our actions and investment continue to recognise the significant impact the COVID-19 pandemic has and will continue to have on transport usage. The plan looks beyond the immediate impacts of COVID-19 towards the longer-term future of transport in Scotland.

Evidence, Data and Engagement

4. COVID-19 has affected data collection, with face-to-face research and engagement was not possible for a prolonged period during periods where restrictions were in place. This altered the way research was undertaken which in turn affected the continuity of data series from before the pandemic. However, where possible Transport Scotland have remained committed to working in collaboration with stakeholders to gather insight and data on equalities issues.

5. There was significant engagement across the transport sector and close working with local authorities. Transport Scotland worked with a range of stakeholders - transport operators, passengers, Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), representative bodies and third sector, education, health, and business to inform understanding of the impact of the pandemic on transport travel and behavior, and mange demand for transport based on the evidence we gathered.

6. We established a Transport Equality Network during the pandemic, which had membership from stakeholders including Poverty and Inequality Commission, Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland, Disability Equality Scotland, Young Scot, Engender, Age Scotland and Interfaith Scotland. Insight and advice from this network fed into a number of policy areas.

7. We set up a People's Panel on a pilot basis to test approaches to citizen engagement and to inform the development of the second NTS Delivery Plan. This involved recruiting members of the public from a range of backgrounds across Scotland and engaging with them online on the broad issues underlying the four priorities of the NTS, seeking feedback on several of the core policies in each area. A report detailing the findings from the Panel is available on the Transport Scotland website.

8. We also took part internally in an SG wide exercise to improve equalities data and identified a number of key actions we are taking forward, including making improvements to the way in which report on issues around disability and transport.

9. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the NTS is underway with the publication of a monitoring and evaluation framework and also baseline report. This and subsequent annual reporting will enable us to track our progress towards achieving the outcomes in the Strategy. All indicators included in the monitoring and evaluation framework have been selected based on their ability to be disaggregated by protected characteristics, where possible, showing trends over time. We will continue to report on equalities issues through annual monitoring of the NTS.

Impact Assessments

10. The first NTS Delivery Plan (2020-2022) was published in December 2020. Transport Scotland commissioned consultants to undertake a range of impact assessments on the 199 actions contained within the Plan, namely:

- Combined Social and Equalities Impact Assessment (SEQIA) which incorporates Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment (FSDA) and Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA)
- Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (HIIA)
- Islands and Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)
- Business Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA)

11. A public consultation on the draft assessment reports was held from November 2021 to January 2022 generating responses from 15 organisations and one individual. Consultants also undertook background research and extensive internal engagement across the Scottish Government and facilitated workshops on each assessment to inform their draft reports.

12. The reports, finalised in August 2022, set out the findings and including a review of pertinent equalities and socio-economic issues and high-level assessment informed by consideration of the key issues and evidence. A provisional 'score' was assigned to each of the strategic policies. The reports will be published on the National Transport Strategy webpage.

13. Previously, on 5 February 2020, Transport Scotland published the NTS2 Equality Impact Assessment at a strategic level. This assessment recognised that transport affects access to services, amenities, economic opportunities and social activities for all people across all parts of Scotland and that the NTS therefore affects any person in Scotland who travels for any purpose and by any mode, and, interacts with or faces barriers to accessing the transport system.

14. The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity launched the Transport Transition Plan (TTP). The TTP is a continually evolving plan that outlines the actions Transport Scotland has taken to date and the planning being undertaken to prepare the transport system as we transition through the COVID-19 crisis. To inform the TTP a number of Impact Assessments are currently under way, including Equality Impact Assessment; Fairer Scotland Duty; and Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment.

15. In September 2020 the Transport Transition Plan - EQIA Interim Update was published setting out initial findings from the consultation and engagement undertaken to support the Impact Assessment - which will remain live and dynamic until the Transport Transition Plan is closed off. This update provides an overview of next steps which will focus on using the evidence and issues identified through the assessments to inform our decision making process.

16. On 20 January 2022, Transport Scotland published the draft second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2), which considers the transport needs of Scotland's people and communities, and examines active travel (walking, wheeling, cycling), bus, ferry, rail and motorways and trunk roads as well as passenger and freight access to major ports and airports. These needs are reviewed from national and regional perspectives to reflect their different geographies, travel patterns and demands. As part of the review, an Equality Impact Assessment, Island Communities Impact Assessment, Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment and Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment has been undertaken. These draft reports were also published in draft, which commenced a 12-week consultation period. STPR2 is scheduled to be published by the end of 2022, including the finalised versions of the impact assessments.

Procurement

17. The Transport Scotland Annual Procurement Report for 2021 was published on 23 December 2021. The report highlights that Transport Scotland continues to investigate ways to further increase community engagement, provide improved community benefits, and further develop our engagement with the third sector and supported businesses. Community benefits reported include:
    - Creation of over 420 new entrants positions, around 17 apprenticeships and 65 graduate positions;
    - 30 work placements for students and persons not currently in education;
    - Award of 880 sub-contracts valued in excess of £300 million; and
    - Over £0.5 million of spend with supported businesses and social enterprises.