



Northern Ireland
Assembly

SECTION 75 SCREENING FORM

What is a policy?

The Equality Commission has defined 'policies' as 'all the ways a public authority carries out, or proposes to carry out, its function relating to Northern Ireland'. The Act defines 'functions' as including powers and duties.

These are effectively catch-all definitions which cover the Secretariat's policies, strategies, schemes, procedures and functions. You should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies as well as external policies. If you are in doubt please contact the Equality Unit for advice.

Part 1 Policy scoping

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context, and to set out the aims and objectives for the policy being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

Background to the Policy/Strategy/Procedure to be screened.

Include details of any consultations which have been conducted and whether the policy has previously been tabled at SMG/Assembly Commission meetings.

The Assembly Commission's Budget for 2015-16 covers expenditure on Members' salaries and allowances, Secretariat staff and general administrative expenditure. The budget for the Commission in 2015/16 has been reduced by 5%, which equates to a cut of just over £2m.

The Assembly Commission provides a Childcare Scheme (2014-15), whose funding is designed to assist Secretariat staff in meeting their childcare costs. The scheme is open to all eligible staff i.e. those who have qualifying children under the age of 14. At present the assistance provided by the Scheme takes the form of an allowance paid towards the cost of the care of a child while the parents are at work. This scheme is unique to the Northern Ireland Assembly and is not offered by any other body in the public sector.

The scheme has a two-tier approach to the provision of this assistance, which is based on the age of the qualifying child:

1st From birth to age 5, or until the child starts school (whichever is earlier). Caring costs incurred in excess of £38.20 per week attracts an allowance of £38.20 per week.

2nd From age 5 (or starts school, whichever is earlier), up to the age of 14. Caring costs incurred in excess of £19.10 per week attracts an allowance of £19.10 per week.

As part of the Commission's Budget for 2015-16 the current scheme will transition from a 'salary plus' scheme (as set out above) to a 'salary sacrifice' scheme (2015-16), saving approximately £280k per annum.

The salary sacrifice-based Childcare Scheme 2015-16 involves staff purchasing Childcare Vouchers – a cost-saving employee benefit, available to all working parents, implemented through the Commission's payroll.

Staff can swap part of their salary (tax and National Insurance free) to contribute towards their childcare costs, for children up to the age of 15. Each working parent has the potential to save over £900 per year on childcare by using the Childcare Voucher scheme, because the amount they swap is deducted from their salary before tax and National Insurance is applied. As both parents can register for Childcare Vouchers, the potential household savings are up to £1,800 each year.

The Assembly Commission also saves money because the amount each parent swaps from their salary is exempt from employers' National Insurance Contributions.

The Commission also considered, and subsequently rejected, three alternative options:

- Additional general reduction of £284k applied to administrative costs
- Additional reduction of 12.8 FTE agency workers
- Additional reduction of 6.4 FTE permanent staff

1. Policy Details

Name of the policy to be screened:

Assembly Commission Childcare Scheme 2015-16

Is this policy new or revised?

Revised policy

What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes of the policy)

The purpose of Childcare Scheme 2015-16 is to assist Secretariat staff in meeting their childcare costs. At present (i.e. under the 2014-15 Scheme) the assistance provided by the Scheme takes the form of an allowance paid towards the cost of the care of a child while the parents are at work. This is known as a 'salary plus' scheme.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

Head of HR

Directorate responsible for devising and delivering the policy?

Corporate Services Directorate

2. Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

Yes No

If yes, are they

- Financial
- Legislative
- Other, please specify: [Click here to enter text.](#)

3. Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

- Staff
- Service users
- other public sector organisations
- voluntary/community/trade unions
- Other, please specify : [Click here to enter text.](#)

4. Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are these policies? Please list:

Assembly Commission Budget for 2015-16

The Assembly Commission's Budget for 2015-16 covers expenditure on Members' salaries and allowances, Secretariat staff and general administrative expenditure. The budget for the Commission in 2015/16 has been reduced by 5%, which equates to a cut of just over £2m.

As part of the Commission's Budget for 2015-16 the Childcare Scheme will transition from a 'salary plus' scheme (2014-15) to a 'salary sacrifice scheme' (2015-16), saving approximately £280k per annum.

The Commission's Budget for 2015-16 was considered by the Commission at an informal workshop held on 6 March 2015, and formally on 10 March 2015. The Budget was approved by the Commission on 18 March 2015.

5. Consideration of available data/research (This means any data or information you currently hold in relation to the policy or gathered during policy development).

Evidence to inform the screening process may take many forms and should help you to decide who the policy might affect the most. It will also help ensure that your screening decision is informed by relevant data.

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) do you hold to inform your decision making process?

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information
Religious belief	<p>The proposed policy change does not in any way contain any actions that are contrary or impact upon the religious beliefs of Commission employees.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>The Childcare Scheme is open to all eligible Commission employees i.e. those who have qualifying children under the age of 14. No eligible Commission employee has been refused access to the scheme.</p> <p>The Assembly Childcare 120 staff utilize the Childcare Allowance Scheme 2014-15. The community background breakdown is as follows:</p> <p>Not declared: 5%</p> <p>Protestant: 56.7%</p> <p>Roman Catholic: 38.3%</p> <p>The Community background of all Commission employees is 4.5% not declared, 56.6% Protestant and 38.9% Roman Catholic.</p>
Political opinion	<p>N/A – The proposed policy change does not in any way contain any actions that are contrary to, or impact upon, the political opinion of Commission employees.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>The Childcare Scheme is open to all eligible Commission employees i.e. those who have qualifying children under the age of 14. No eligible Commission employee has been refused access to the</p>

	scheme.														
Racial group	<p>N/A – The proposed policy change does not in any way contain any actions that are contrary to, or impact upon, Commission employees from different racial groups.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>The Childcare Scheme is open to all eligible Commission employees i.e. those who have qualifying children under the age of 14. No eligible Commission employee has been refused access to the scheme.</p>														
Age	<p>The proposed policy change does not in any way contain any actions that are contrary or impact upon Commission employees of different ages.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>The Childcare Scheme is open to all eligible Commission employees i.e. those who have qualifying children under the age of 14. No eligible Commission employee has been refused access to the scheme.</p> <p>The Assembly Childcare 120 staff utilise the Childcare Allowance Scheme 2014-15. The age breakdown is as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Range</th> <th>No. of staff</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>20-30</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>31-35</td> <td>28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>36-40</td> <td>28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>41-45</td> <td>34</td> </tr> <tr> <td>46-50</td> <td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>51-65</td> <td>9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age Range	No. of staff	20-30	4	31-35	28	36-40	28	41-45	34	46-50	17	51-65	9
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20-30	4														
31-35	28														
36-40	28														
41-45	34														
46-50	17														
51-65	9														
Marital status	<p>N/A – The proposed policy change does not in any way contain any actions that are contrary to, or impact upon, the marital status of Commission employees.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>The Childcare Scheme is open to all eligible Commission employees i.e. those who have qualifying children under the age of 14. No eligible Commission employee has been refused access to the scheme.</p>														

Sexual orientation	<p>N/A – The proposed policy change does not in any way contain any actions that are contrary to, or impact upon, the sexual orientation of Commission employees.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>The Childcare Scheme is open to all eligible Commission employees i.e. those who have qualifying children under the age of 14. No eligible Commission employee has been refused access to the scheme.</p>				
Men and women generally	<p>N/A – The proposed policy change does not in any way contain any actions that are contrary to, or impact upon, men or women generally.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>The Childcare Scheme is open to all eligible Commission employees i.e. those who have qualifying children under the age of 14. No eligible Commission employee has been refused access to the scheme.</p> <p>The Assembly Childcare 120 staff utilise the Childcare Allowance Scheme 2014-15. The gender breakdown is as follows:</p> <table data-bbox="488 1094 773 1192"> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>34.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Male</td> <td>65.8%</td> </tr> </table> <p>The gender breakdown of all Commission employees is 43% female and 57% male.</p>	Female	34.2%	Male	65.8%
Female	34.2%				
Male	65.8%				
Disability	<p>N/A – The proposed policy change does not in any way contain any actions that are contrary to, or impact upon, Commission employees with a disability.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <p>The Childcare Scheme is open to all eligible Commission employees i.e. those who have qualifying children under the age of 14. No eligible Commission employee has been refused access to the scheme.</p>				
Dependants	<p>The Commission’s Budget for 2015-16 does impact upon Commission employees with qualifying children under the age of 14, in respect of whom Childcare Allowance is claimed under the</p>				

	<p>Commission's Childcare Scheme 2015-16.</p> <p>The Assembly Commission provides a Childcare Scheme (2014-15), whose funding is designed to assist Secretariat staff in meeting their childcare costs.</p> <p>At present the assistance provided by the Scheme takes the form of an allowance paid towards the cost of the care of a child while the parents are at work.</p> <p>As part of the Commission's Budget for 2015-16 the current scheme will transition from a 'salary plus' scheme (as set out above) to a 'salary sacrifice scheme', saving approximately £280k per annum.</p> <p>The salary sacrifice-based scheme involves staff purchasing Childcare Vouchers – a cost-saving employee benefit, available to all working parents, implemented through the Commission's payroll.</p> <p>Staff can swap part of their salary (tax and National Insurance free) to contribute towards their childcare costs, for children up to the age of 15. Each working parent has the potential to save over £900 per year on childcare by using the Childcare Voucher scheme, because the amount they swap is deducted from their salary before tax and National Insurance is applied. As both parents can register for Childcare Vouchers, the potential household savings are up to £1,800 each year.</p> <p>The Commission also considered, and subsequently rejected, three alternative options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional general reduction of £284k applied to administrative costs• Additional reduction of 12.8 FTE agency workers• Additional reduction of 6.4 FTE permanent staff
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6. Current Assessment of Impact

Having looked at the data/information referred to above at point 5, what does this tell you are the needs, experiences and priorities for the people who fall into the groups below, in relation to your policy? And what is the actual or likely adverse impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by the policy. (See appendix 1 for information on levels of impact).

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities and details of policy impact	Level of Impact
Religious belief	The proposed policy change will not have actual or likely adverse impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Political opinion	The proposed policy change will not have actual or likely adverse impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Racial group	The proposed policy change will not have actual or likely adverse impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Age	The proposed policy change will not have actual or likely adverse impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Marital status	The proposed policy change will not have actual or likely adverse impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Sexual orientation	The proposed policy change will not have actual or likely adverse impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Men and women generally	The proposed policy change will not have actual or likely adverse impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Disability	The proposed policy change will not have actual or likely adverse impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Dependants	The move from the Childcare Scheme 2014-15 to the Childcare Scheme 2015-16 will have minor actual or likely adverse impact on equality of opportunity. However under the Childcare Scheme 2015-16	Minor

	<p>Commission employees can swap part of their salary (tax and National Insurance free) to contribute towards their childcare costs, for children up to the age of 15. Each working parent has the potential to save over £900 per year on childcare by using the Childcare Voucher scheme, because the amount they swap is deducted from their salary before tax and National Insurance is applied. As both parents can register for Childcare Vouchers, the potential household savings are up to £1,800 each year.</p> <p>It is noted that there may be a difficulty for parents of children with disabilities to enter into registered childcare arrangements. However from having conducted some research into this matter it is clear that registered child-minders who specialize in caring for children with disabilities are available.</p> <p>It should also be noted that a 'salary plus' Childcare Scheme is not provided by any other public sector body.</p>	
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If you do not have enough data to tell you about potential or actual impacts you may need to conduct a pre-consultation to generate more data and to distinguish what groups are potentially affected by your policy.

Part 2 Screening Questions

1 Are there any steps/actions which could be taken to reduce any adverse impact as addressed in question 6?		
Section 75 category	Issue	Mitigating Measure
Religious belief	No adverse impact.	None
Political opinion	No adverse impact.	None
Racial group	No adverse impact.	None
Age	No adverse impact.	None
Marital status	No adverse impact.	None
Sexual orientation	No adverse impact.	None
Men and women generally	No adverse impact.	None
Disability	No adverse impact.	None
Dependants	Some adverse impact. Under the Childcare Scheme 2015-16 the Commission will implement a Childcare Voucher Scheme whereby Commission employees can swap part of their salary (tax and National Insurance free) to contribute towards their childcare costs,	Minor

	<p>for children up to the age of 15. Each working parent has the potential to save over £900 per year on childcare by using the Childcare Voucher scheme, because the amount they swap is deducted from their salary before tax and National Insurance is applied. As both parents can register for Childcare Vouchers, the potential household savings are up to £1,800 each year.</p> <p>A phased transition to the salary sacrifice scheme will be implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Childcare Voucher Scheme will become available for all staff on 1 July 2015;• For staff at AG6 grade and above, the current Childcare Allowance Scheme will end on 30 June 2015;• Staff at AG8 and AG7 grades can continue to avail of the Childcare Allowance Scheme at 50% of the current rates (i.e. 50% of £38.20 or £19.10 per week which equates to £19.10 or £9.55 per week) for a period of three months from 1 July 2015 to 30 September 2015; and• From 1 October 2015, the current Childcare Allowance Scheme will end for all staff. <p>It is noted that there may be a difficulty for parents of children with disabilities to enter into</p>	
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	<p>registered childcare arrangements. However from having conducted some research into this matter it is clear that registered child-minders who specialize in caring for children with disabilities are available.</p> <p>It should also be noted that a 'salary plus' Childcare Scheme is not provided by any other public sector body.</p>	
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2. Is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations in what you are proposing to do?

Please provide reasons.

No - the Childcare Scheme is already open to all eligible Commission employees i.e. those who have dependent children under the age of 14. No eligible Commission employee has been refused access to the scheme.

3. Consultation

Tell us about who you have talked to about your proposals, either internally or externally, to help you decide if the policy needs further or no further equality investigation?

Since the Commission's decision to amend the Secretariat Childcare Scheme for 2015-16, Commission officials have engaged in discussions with Trade Union Side (TUS) on the implementation of this change from a 'salary plus' to a 'salary sacrifice' scheme.

TUS is not content with the Commission's decision and believes that the removal of the Childcare Scheme is financially detrimental to a number of its members.

4 Disability Duties?

Consider whether the policy:

- a) Discourages disabled people from participating in public life and fails to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.

The Childcare Scheme 2015-16 does not discourage disabled people from participating in public life.

- b) Provides an opportunity to better positive attitudes towards disabled people or encourages their participation in public life.

The Childcare Scheme 2015-16 does not impact on attitudes towards disabled people.

Additional considerations

Multiple identities

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?

(For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

No level of impact on any specific / multiple Section 75 categories has been identified during screening.

Part 3 Screening decision

1. If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (*none*), please provide details of the reasons.

The decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment.

No level of impact on eight out of the nine Section 75 categories has been identified during screening.

In respect of the 'Dependents' Section 75 category, a minor impact has been identified, and mitigation measures will be put in place including:

- The provision of advice for staff moving from Childcare Scheme 2014-15 to Childcare Scheme 2015-16;
- Implementation of a tax efficient voucher Childcare Scheme enabling each working parent to potentially save over £900 per year on childcare because the amount they swap is deducted from their salary before tax and National Insurance is applied. As both parents can register for Childcare Vouchers, the potential household savings are up to £1,800 each year; and
- A phased transition to the salary sacrifice scheme will be implemented.

2. If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, but the policy has minor equality impacts which can be mitigated/provided by an alternative policy, and therefore does not require and EQIA (*minor*), provide details of the reason for the decision with proposed changes/amendments for an alternative policy to be introduced.

Mitigation measures will be put in place including:

- The provision of advice for staff moving from Childcare Scheme 2014-15 to Childcare Scheme 2015-16;
- Implementation of a tax efficient voucher Childcare Scheme enabling each working parent to potentially save over £900 per year on childcare because the amount they swap is deducted from their salary before tax and National Insurance is applied. As both parents can register for Childcare Vouchers, the potential household savings are up to £1,800 each year; and
- A phased transition to the salary sacrifice scheme will be implemented.

3. If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment (*major*), please provide details of the reasons.

Not applicable.

4. Timetabling and prioritising for EQIA

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been ‘**screened in**’ for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	Click
Social need	Click
Effect on people’s daily lives	Click
Relevance to a public authority’s functions	Click

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the CCSU in timetabling. Details of the Equality Impact Assessment Timetable will be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

Yes No

If yes, please provide details

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Part 4 Monitoring

Effective monitoring will help identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the Commission to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

The Equality Commission for NI (ECNI) recommends that where a policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly for adverse impact.

See ECNI Monitoring Guidance for use by Public Authorities (July 2007) pages 9-10, paragraphs 2.13 – 2.20

What data is required in the future to ensure effective monitoring?

What are these policies? Please list:

Not applicable.

Part 5 - Data Protection

1. If applicable, has legal advice been given due consideration?

Yes No N/A

2. Has due consideration been given to information security in relation to this policy?

Yes No

Part 6 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by:	Position/Job Title	Date
Sinead McDonnell	Head of HR	3/4/15
Approved by:		
Richard Stewart	Director of Corporate Services	3/4/15

The policy lead should sign and date the policy under the 'screened by' heading. It should then be countersigned by an approver. The Approver should be the senior manager responsible for the policy which would normally be Head of Business. In instances where a screening decision concludes that an EQIA is required then the screening form should be countersigned by the Director instead of the Head of Business.

There are of course a range of issues which may fall within the scope of being novel, contentious or politically sensitive and could only be taken forward following consultation with the Assembly Commission. Where policy screening highlights novel, contentious or politically sensitive issues, once approved by the Director, should be forwarded to the Clerk/Chief Executive for review, prior to proceeding to SMG and the Assembly Commission.

A copy of the completed screening template and any other relevant associated documentation should be forwarded to the Equality Manager.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO INFORM THE ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT TO THE EQUALITY COMMISSION

(PLEASE NOTE : THIS IS NOT PART OF THE SCREENING TEMPLATE BUT MUST BE COMPLETED AND RETURNED WITH THE SCREENING)

1. Please provide details of any measures taken to enhance the level of engagement with individuals and representative groups. Please include any use of the Equality Commissions guidance on consulting with and involving children and young people.

Not applicable.

2. In developing this policy / decision were any changes made as a result of equality issues raised during :

- (a) pre-consultation / engagement;
- (b) formal consultation;
- (c) the screening process; and/or
- (d) monitoring / research findings.

If so, please provide a brief summary including how the issue was identified, what changes were made, and what will be the expected outcomes / impacts for those effected.

Not applicable.

3. Does this policy / decision include any measure(s) to improve access to services including the provision of information in accessible formats? If so please provide a short summary.

None.

Appendix 1

Screening Questions

Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, you should consider your answers to the questions above.

In addition, the screening questions above further assist you in assessing your policy and must be completed. Some of these questions require you to assess the level of impact of the proposed policy on “equality of opportunity” and “good relations”. The scale used when assessing this impact is either “None”, “Minor” or “Major”. The following paragraphs set out what each of these terms mean.

If your conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then you may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is ‘screened out’ as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, you should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If your conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If your conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of a ‘major’ impact

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;

- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

In favour of 'minor' impact

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of none

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.