



Northern Ireland
Assembly

SECTION 75 SCREENING FORM

Section 75 Statutory Equality Duties

<http://www.equalityni.org/S75duties>

The promotion of equality of opportunity entails more than the elimination of discrimination. It may also require proactive measures to be taken to maintain and secure equality of opportunity.

Section 75 (1) requires the Assembly Commission in carrying out its functions, powers and duties to have *due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between –*

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability and persons without
- persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to the obligations set out above, the Commission is also required to:

- a) have *regard to the desirability of promoting good relations* between persons of different
- religious belief
 - political opinion; or
 - racial group
- b) meet legislative obligations under the Disability Discrimination Order.

What is a policy?

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland state in their guidance¹ that the term ‘policy’ is used to denote any strategy, policy (proposed/amended/existing) or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten.

The Commission’s Equality Scheme reflects the Equality Commission’s definition of a policy and this should be applied in determining what needs to be screened. The Equality Scheme states:

“In the context of Section 75, ‘policy’ is very broadly defined and it covers all the ways in which we carry out or propose to carry out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland. In respect of this equality scheme, the term policy is used for any (proposed/amended/existing) strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written

¹Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, A Guide for Public Authorities’ April 2010, page 30. A policy may include planning decisions, service changes, corporate strategies, policy development, practices, guidelines, procedures and protocols; board papers

or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, e.g. ‘draft’, ‘pilot’, ‘high level’ or ‘sectoral’.”

If you are in doubt, please contact the Equality and Good Relations Unit for advice. Equality Screening guidance notes are also available on Assist.

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.

Policy Details

<p>Name of the policy to be screened/description: Learning and Development Strategy</p> <hr/>
<p>Is this policy an existing, new or revised policy? (Please append policy to screening form) New</p> <hr/>
<p>What is it trying to achieve? (brief outline of intended aims/outcomes of the policy) The Strategy and its’ associated Action Plan focuses on enabling all staff to maximise their potential, enjoy their work and feel valued, encouraged and inspired to achieve professional goals. The Strategy aims to collectively deliver the Assembly Commission’s vision and purpose of <i>‘excellence, expertise and innovation in support of the Northern Ireland Assembly as a legislature which is accessible to the public it represents’</i>.</p> <hr/>

Are any of the Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy/decision? Please explain how.

All staff will benefit from the implementation of the Strategy and the associated activities included within the action plan. The Strategy will deliver an awareness raising health and wellbeing programme in line with local and national awareness campaigns which with expected benefits for individuals with a disability, The H&W programme will also deliver a range of workshops for staff as parents which will include expected benefits for staff with dependents.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

An external Consultant, employed through AKU Training Services (Ms. Tanya Kennedy) was successfully procured to research and draft the Strategy and Action Plan

Directorate responsible for devising and delivering the policy?

Corporate Services

Was consultation carried out as part of this screening exercise?

Yes No

Background to the Policy to be screened.

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

1. Semi-structured interviews were held with senior managers (including the SMG and Heads of Business) and organisational stakeholders (including TUS and Clerk Assistants). The purpose of these interviews was to establish perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that would offer insight into where priorities for learning and development might lie.
2. Five Secretariat wide focus groups were held with 52 staff in February 2021 through a virtual environment using on-line collaboration tools including chat facility, breakout rooms and polling technology.
3. A Learning Needs Survey was conducted with all staff using Survey Monkey with a completion rate of 67%. Responses were distributed evenly across

all directorates and grades, therefore the data generated can be considered reliable.

4. Meetings were held with the consultant and the Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors on 19 March and 23 April 2021
5. The draft Strategy was issued for consultation to all staff and TUS in May 2021.
6. SMG to consider the draft Strategy and associated action plan at their meeting on 24 June 2019

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.](#)

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.](#)

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are these policies and who owns them? Please list:

Health and Wellbeing Framework

Consideration of available data/research (*This means any data or information you currently hold in relation to the policy or have 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? For example, is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups?

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information
Religious belief	<p>The Learning and Development Strategy applies to all staff and procedures are in place to ensure equality of opportunity to all the protected categories. As at 01.04.21, the staff composition was as follows:</p> <p>Community Background Protestant – 187 (58% of staff) Roman Catholic – 125 (38% of staff) Non Determined – 13 (4% of staff)</p>
Political opinion	<p>The Learning and Development Strategy applies to all staff and procedures are in place to ensure equality of opportunity to all the protected categories.</p>
Racial group	<p>We do not gather information on the racial background for staff but the new Learning & Development Strategy will apply to all Assembly Commission staff.</p>

Age	<p>The Learning and Development Strategy applies to all staff and procedures are in place to ensure equality of opportunity to all the protected categories. The age demographics for workforce composition as of 01.04.21 was:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="505 363 1138 821"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="505 363 821 401">AGE</th> <th data-bbox="821 363 1138 401">NUMBER</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 401 821 438">20 – 24</td> <td data-bbox="821 401 1138 438">4</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 438 821 476">25 - 29</td> <td data-bbox="821 438 1138 476">4</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 476 821 514">30 - 34</td> <td data-bbox="821 476 1138 514">11</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 514 821 552">35 - 39</td> <td data-bbox="821 514 1138 552">40</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 552 821 590">40 - 44</td> <td data-bbox="821 552 1138 590">58</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 590 821 627">45 - 49</td> <td data-bbox="821 590 1138 627">65</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 627 821 665">50 - 54</td> <td data-bbox="821 627 1138 665">58</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 665 821 703">55 - 59</td> <td data-bbox="821 665 1138 703">39</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 703 821 741">60 - 64</td> <td data-bbox="821 703 1138 741">33</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 741 821 779">65+</td> <td data-bbox="821 741 1138 779">13</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 779 821 821">TOTAL</td> <td data-bbox="821 779 1138 821">325</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	AGE	NUMBER	20 – 24	4	25 - 29	4	30 - 34	11	35 - 39	40	40 - 44	58	45 - 49	65	50 - 54	58	55 - 59	39	60 - 64	33	65+	13	TOTAL	325
AGE	NUMBER																								
20 – 24	4																								
25 - 29	4																								
30 - 34	11																								
35 - 39	40																								
40 - 44	58																								
45 - 49	65																								
50 - 54	58																								
55 - 59	39																								
60 - 64	33																								
65+	13																								
TOTAL	325																								
Marital status	<p>The Learning and Development Strategy applies to all staff and procedures are in place to ensure equality of opportunity to all the protected categories.</p>																								
Sexual orientation	<p>We do not gather information on staff sexual orientation but the new Learning & Development Strategy will apply to all Assembly Commission staff.</p>																								
Men and women generally	<p>The Learning and Development Strategy applies to all staff and procedures are in place to ensure equality of opportunity to all the protected categories. Gender breakdown of Permanent Staff as of 01.04.21 was: Male – 180 (56% of staff) Female – 145 (44% of staff)</p>																								
Disability	<p>The Learning and Development Strategy applies to all staff and procedures are in place to ensure equality of opportunity to all the protected categories. During 2020, 8 staff completed the Annual Disability Audit to indicate that they consider that they have a disability. This information has been collected from staff however it is noted that there may be other staff with disabilities who have not responded to the audit.</p>																								
Dependants	<p>We do not gather information on whether or not staff have dependents but the new Learning & Development Strategy will apply to all Assembly Commission staff. We hold data in relation to those staff that work part-time hours which could have a correlation with this category. As of 10 June 2021, we have 19 Males and 49 Females who are working reduced hours (staff on partial retirement included (13M / 5 F)).</p>																								

Current Assessment of Impact

Having looked at the data/information you have collected in the question above, 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 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	Having reviewed other available data than workforce composition demographics, e.g. qualitative evaluations received following learning events and consultation responses, there is no further evidence to suggest that there is a differential impact within this category.	None
Political opinion	Having reviewed other available data than workforce composition demographics, e.g. qualitative evaluations received following learning events and consultation responses, there is no further evidence to suggest that there is a differential impact within this category.	None
Racial group	Having reviewed other available data than workforce composition demographics, e.g. qualitative evaluations received following learning events and consultation responses, there is no further evidence to suggest that there is a differential impact within this category.	None
Age	Having reviewed other available data than workforce composition demographics, e.g. qualitative evaluations received following learning events and consultation responses, there is no further evidence to suggest that there is a differential impact within this category.	None
Marital status	Having reviewed other available data than workforce composition demographics, e.g. qualitative evaluations received following learning events and consultation responses, there is no further evidence	None

	to suggest that there is a differential impact within this category.	
Sexual orientation	Having reviewed other available data than workforce composition demographics, e.g. qualitative evaluations received following learning events and consultation responses, there is no further evidence to suggest that there is a differential impact within this category.	None
Men and women generally	Having reviewed other available data than workforce composition demographics, e.g. qualitative evaluations received following learning events and consultation responses, there is no further evidence to suggest that there is a differential impact within this category.	None
Disability	Having reviewed other available data than workforce composition demographics, e.g. qualitative evaluations received following learning events and consultation responses, one member of staff has highlighted that consideration be given to the provision and delivery of training materials for individuals who have neurological disabilities.	Minor
Dependants	Having reviewed other available data than workforce composition demographics, e.g. qualitative evaluations received following learning events and consultation responses, several staff have highlighted that consideration be given to the timings for delivery of learning events for staff who have dependents or work on a part-time basis.	Minor

If you do not have enough data to tell you about potential or actual impacts, you may need to generate more data to distinguish what groups are potentially affected by your policy.

Part 2 Screening Questions

1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?		
Section 75 category	Issue	Minor/major/none?
Religious belief	None	None
Political opinion	None	None
Racial group	None	None
Age	None	None
Marital status	None	None
Sexual orientation	None	None
Men and women generally	None	None
Disability	Access to training facilities including training delivery and literature	Minor
Dependants	Timings for the delivery of learning events	Minor

2 Are there any actions which could be taken to reduce or mitigate any adverse impact which has been identified or opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the section 75 categories?		
Section 75 category	Issue	Mitigating Measure
Religious belief	None	None
Political opinion	None	None
Racial group	None	None
Age	None	None
Marital status	None	None
Sexual orientation	None	None
Men and women generally	None	None
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct consultation prior to events with each staff person who highlights a required adjustment to ensure equality of opportunity in accessing and participating in learning events. • Use of alternative formats for delivery of learning presentations / literature for individuals with a disability 	Minor

Dependants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Later starting times for Learning events to allow for parents to drop off children to school. • Learning events will be offered on different days to accommodate parents working part-time. 	Minor
------------	--	-------

3 To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? minor/major/none		
Good relations category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact minor/major/none
Religious belief		None
Political opinion		None
Racial group		None

4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?		
Section 75 category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief		No
Political opinion		No
Racial group		No

Consultation

Tell us about who you have talked to about your proposals, either internally or externally and who you have formally or informally consulted, to help you decide if the policy needs further equality investigation?

The consultant, as part of the project has actively engaged with the Senior Management Group and all staff across the NI Secretariat to develop and discuss the development of strategy proposals. This also included discussions with Trade Union Side and other external Parliamentary Institutions.

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 Health & Wellbeing Programme will include both awareness raising activities and direct learning events which will be of benefit towards promoting positive attitudes towards individuals with a disability.

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

The Health & Wellbeing Programme will include both awareness raising activities and direct learning events which will be of benefit towards promoting positive attitudes towards individuals with a disability.

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).

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

No potential impacts on the policy in relation to people with multiple identities.

Part 3 Screening decision

Through screening, an assessment is made of the likely impacts – either major, minor or none – of the policy on equality of opportunity and/or good relations for the relevant categories. Completion of screening should lead to one of the following three outcomes; please mark an x in the appropriate box:

- 'Screened out'** i.e. the likely impact is none and no further action is required
- 'Screened out' with mitigation** i.e. the likely impact is minor and measures will be taken to mitigate the impact or an alternative policy will be proposed
- 'Screened in' for an equality impact assessment (EQIA)** i.e. the likely impact is major and the policy will now be subject to an EQIA

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

The Strategy and its associated action plan are not thought to have any significant equality or good relations issues. The HR L&D team already provide access to any reasonable adjustment request to facilitate participation of staff. The HR L&D team will continue to avail of feedback provided by staff through survey and consultation methods to ensure that there are no differential impacts for individuals in relation to section 75 duties.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, but the policy has minor equality impacts, please provide details of the reasons for this decision and of any proposed mitigating measures or proposed alternative policy.

Training delivery and materials will continue to be adapted to accommodate those staff with disabilities in accessing learning events. Learning events will be staggered across the parliamentary week to allow for maximum access for staff with dependents or those working part-time. Learning events will normally commence at 10am to accommodate staff with school drop-offs.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

Click here to enter text.

Timetabling and prioritising for EQIA

Complete this section only if your business area/directorate plans to conduct two or more EQIAs.

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.

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

Please detail how you will monitor the effect of the policy?

The HR L&D team will continue to monitor staff feedback provided through evaluation and consultation methodologies to monitor any adverse impact.

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

Further analysis to take place in relation to the demographics of staff attending events in terms of age, gender and working hours.

Part 5 - Data Protection

If applicable, has legal advice been given due consideration?

Yes No N/A

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
Cathy McGowan	HR L&D Manager	10 June 2021
Approved by:		
Sinead McDonnell	Head of HR	11 June 2021

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

1. Please provide details of any measures taken to enhance the level of engagement with individuals and representative groups.

The External Consultants methodology included a range of data collection methods. Innovative on-line tools were utilized as part of virtual discussions and focus groups to increase feedback and participation e.g. vevox – (live polling app)

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 affected.

No - the HR L&D team are currently aware of the equality matters raised as part of the consultation and mitigating factors are already in use.

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.

The HR L&D team will continue to provide information in alternative formats e.g. use of coloured paper for handouts for dyslexic staff

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.