



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, functions, and practices, whether written or unwritten. 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 and Good Relations 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.

## 1. Policy Details

**Name of the policy to be screened:**

Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21

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**Is this policy new or revised? (Please append policy to screening form)**

New policy

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

Under section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, as the corporate body of the Assembly, must have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Good Relations Action Plan sets out how the Assembly Commission proposes to fulfil this duty over the 2016-21 period when providing the property, staff and services required for the Assembly to carry out its work.

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**Who initiated or wrote the policy?**

The Equality and Good Relations Unit on behalf of the Assembly Commission

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**Directorate responsible for devising and delivering the policy?**

The Equality and Good Relations Unit, which sits within the Corporate Services Directorate, is responsible for devising the action plan and monitoring overall progress on behalf of the Assembly Commission. Individual business areas across the Assembly are responsible for delivering on actions relating to them as outlined in the action plan.

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**Was consultation carried out as part of this screening exercise?**

Yes  No

**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.

In accordance with Equality Commission guidance, the Assembly Commission has produced a Good Relations Action Plan to demonstrate how it will meet its good relations duties under section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This action plan covers the 2016-21 period and follows on from the Good Relations Action Plan for 2012-16.

A Draft Good Relations Action Plan was presented to the Assembly Commission on 3 March 2016, and it agreed to issue the action plan for full public consultation. The consultation ran for 14 weeks from 16 March 2016 to 10 June 2016 – this included two additional weeks to allow for the Easter period.

Advertisements were placed in the Belfast Telegraph, Newsletter and Irish News with details of how to respond to the consultation. Social media was also used to inform people that the consultation was under way. An email with details of the consultation was sent to all Members, party support staff and Secretariat staff, as well as to equality consultees from organisations across Northern Ireland. Reminder emails were also sent to these groups.

As well as engagement with the public, there was also engagement internally with relevant business areas across the Assembly.

There were five responses to the consultation: Cedar Foundation User Forum; Disability Action; Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM); Dr Richard Montague; and Sinn Féin. The full responses will be published on the website alongside the Final Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/>

## 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:**

Please note that the following list is not exhaustive as many of the actions in the plan cross-reference with various policies across the organisation:

Assembly Commission Equality Scheme  
Digital First Strategy  
Dignity at Work Policy  
Engagement Strategy  
Events in Parliament Buildings and its Grounds Policy  
Exhibitions Policy  
External Lighting Policy  
External Recruitment Policy  
Northern Ireland Assembly Corporate Strategy 2015-17  
Protocol for Answers to Assembly Questions  
Review of the Policy on the Flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings  
Security Policy Conduct and Behaviour of Visitors in Parliament Buildings

**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>Data collected on the Assembly Secretariat (as at July 2016) shows the following breakdown:                      193 - Protestant                      126 - Catholic                      14 - non-determined                      Total = 333 members of staff</p> <p>Qualitative data has been gathered through consultation and engagement during the development of policies mentioned within the Good Relations Action Plan, and through monitoring of oral and written questions to the Assembly Commission. This data provides insight into the needs of those of different religious belief and helps to ensure that Parliament Buildings reflects the diversity of the entire community while also being welcoming and providing full and fair access to the operations of the Assembly.</p> <p>In 2013, the Assembly Commission agreed principles to underpin the basis on which historic anniversaries would be marked by the Assembly. The Commission agreed to adopt a consistent and co-ordinated approach to such events to encapsulate the principles and that all events should be branded under the banner ‘Perspectives On...’ to acknowledge an approach to historic events on which there may be differing views. Anniversaries marked under the ‘Perspectives On...’ banner have included the signing of the Ulster Covenant; the Easter Rising; and the Battle of the Somme.</p> <p>This approach has played an important part in promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief and political opinion, and learning from it has helped to inform the development of the Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21.</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Assembly conducts a Good Relations Survey with visitors to Parliament Building periodically. This survey gathers</p>

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	<p>the views of visitors on good relations at Parliament Buildings and includes questions on the political opinion, religion and ethnicity of visitors. Over the period 2015 – 2016, it was found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 39.4% said they were Protestant, 32.4% said they were Catholic, 7.4% said they were of other religion and 20.8% said they had no religion (n = 216).</li> </ul> <p>Please note that caution should be exercised when generalising these results to all visitors as the sample size is relatively small.</p>
<p>Political opinion</p>	<p>The designations of the 108 MLAs are as follows (as at July 2016):</p> <p>Unionist: 56 Nationalist: 40 Other: 12</p> <p>In order to ensure that Parliament Buildings is welcoming to all sections of society and cultural backgrounds, a visitors’ survey, which includes questions on the environs of Parliament Buildings and good relations, is carried out periodically by Secretariat staff. The survey results are collated and analysed by Assembly Research staff.</p> <p>Information on political opinion and religious opinion was gathered through the equality impact assessment (EQIA) on the Review of the Policy on the Flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings. The public consultation on the policy was facilitated by independent consultants, and it captures a range of data on political opinion, including data captured during pre-consultation with users of Parliament Buildings. More details on the EQIA can be found below:</p> <p><a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/review-of-the-policy-on-the-flying-of-the-union-flag-at-parliament-buildings/">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/review-of-the-policy-on-the-flying-of-the-union-flag-at-parliament-buildings/</a></p> <p>The Northern Ireland Assembly conducts a Good Relations Survey with visitors to Parliament Building periodically. This survey gathers the views of visitors on good relations at Parliament Buildings and includes questions on the political opinion, religion and ethnicity of visitors. Over the period 2015 – 2016, it was found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 29.5% of those who completed the survey indicated that they were Unionist, 16.3% indicated that they were Nationalist and 54.2% indicated that they were other (n = 166);</li> </ul> <p>Please note that caution should be exercised when generalising these results to all visitors as the sample size is relatively small.</p>

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<p>Racial group</p>	<p>The latest census (2011) shows that the proportion of the population which belongs to minority ethnic groups has increased from 0.8% in 2001 to 1.8% in 2011.</p> <p>Assembly Community Connect (ACC) works to enhance connections between the Assembly and the community and voluntary sector through education and outreach. Recognising that participation from members of the black minority ethnic (BME) community was low, ACC has focused on engagement with the black minority ethnic (BME) sector through, for example, holding a BME Parliament in association with NICEM.</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Assembly conducts a Good Relations Survey with visitors to Parliament Building periodically. This survey gathers the views of visitors on good relations at Parliament Buildings and includes questions on the political opinion, religion and ethnicity of visitors. Over the period 2015 – 2016, it was found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4.0% indicated that they belonged to a minority ethnic group (n = 201); and,</li> </ul> <p>Please note that caution should be exercised when generalising these results to all visitors as the sample size is relatively small.</p>
<p>Age</p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Marital status</p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Sexual orientation</p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Men and women generally</p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Dependants</p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>

## 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 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	<p>In its submission to the consultation, Sinn Féin talks about acceptance of cultural, political and religious differences. The submission also refers to Equality Commission guidance on good relations, which refers to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.</p> <p>In his consultation response, Dr Richard Montague, states that: <i>“Belfast to be recognized as a shared and diverse city of varying cultures and ethnicities beyond the ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ dichotomy, through promotion of minority ethnic and LGBT community events”</i></p> <p>Dr Montague also states that <i>“...it is clear that there is much in common (or overlap) between ‘Catholics’ and ‘Protestants’ in relation to history, music, language, literature, of instance.”</i></p>	Impact level.
Political opinion	<p>As mentioned above, Sinn Féin talks in its submission about the acceptance of cultural, political and religious differences.</p> <p>Dr Montague notes in his consultation response that <i>“Good Relations policy can promote a ‘shared history’ narrative to counter sectarian beliefs”.</i></p>	Impact level.
Racial group	<p>NICEM notes in its response the Assembly’s intention to consider new art initiatives and suggests that: <i>“This would be a good opportunity to include artwork from ethnic minority artists, or depicting BME subjects, as a high proportion of those visiting Parliament Buildings are not White British/Irish.”</i></p>	Impact level.

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	<p>NICEM also says in its response:</p> <p><i>“It is further noted that the current plan makes provision for targeting ‘disenfranchised groups’, with a focus on youth. In this context, it is important to note that there is a low turnout amongst BME persons entitled to vote, with some commenting that politics in NI does not reflect their interests.</i></p> <p><i>Therefore, it would be useful if the plan expanded its provision for targeting disenfranchised groups beyond youth to include BME people who are entitled to vote in NI.</i></p> <p><i>Also under this section, the plan makes commitments on access to information, with initiatives focusing on the Irish language. According to the 2011 Census, approximately 3% of NI’s population does not have English as their first language.</i></p> <p><i>In 2014/15, 3.5% of new enrolments were newcomer pupils – pupils who do not have English or Irish as their first language – thus it seems likely that language need will increase over the coming years. Thus, it would be useful for the Action Plan to include a commitment to provide information on available services in key minority languages, as well as allow for the translation of relevant documentation - such as consultations, the Equality Scheme and the Action Plan itself - upon request.”</i></p> <p>As regards training, NICEM notes with approval that both new and existing staff will receive good relations training and asks for more detail on training staff will receive on good relations between persons of different racial group.</p> <p>In its response, Sinn Féin also mentions the importance of staff receiving anti-racism/sectarianism training.</p>	
Age	Click here to enter text.	Impact level.

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Marital status	Click here to enter text.	Impact level.
Sexual orientation	Click here to enter text.	Impact level.
Men and women generally	Click here to enter text.	Impact level.
Disability	Disability Action notes in its response that traditional methods of engagement should be employed for people with multiple identities, in particular, people with disabilities.	Impact level.
Dependants	Click here to enter text.	Impact level.

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	The Assembly Commission will undertake a range of measures to promote good relations between persons of different religious belief and political opinion. Some of the measures are highlighted below; a full list of actions is included in the Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21.	Impact level.

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	<p><a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/</a></p> <p>Measures include hosting events for external guests and organisations to highlight issues and work in the wider community; providing good relations training to staff; ensuring that the Assembly and its work is open to all sections of the community through its events and outreach and education programmes and through external Committee meetings; and ensuring all sections of the community have an opportunity to submit evidence to Committees.</p> <p>The action plan also includes an action to agree a language policy and to consider new art initiatives to reflect the wider community within Parliament Buildings.</p>	
<p>Political opinion</p>	<p>Please see information provided above for religious belief. As stated above, a full table of measures is included in the Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21</p> <p><a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/</a></p>	<p>Impact level.</p>

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Racial group	<p>The action plan includes an aim to increase engagement with minority ethnic communities to inform groups how to utilise resources available through Assembly Community Connect and partner organisations.</p> <p>It also includes an action to target members and representative organisations of minority ethnic communities to attend 'How the Assembly Works' sessions to encourage a 5% increase in participation.</p> <p>Staff will receive training on good relations issues, including racial discrimination awareness.</p>	Impact level.
Age	Details of impact.	Impact level.
Marital status	Details of impact.	Impact level.
Sexual orientation	Details of impact.	Impact level.
Men and women generally	Details of impact.	Impact level.
Disability	Details of impact.	Impact level.
Dependants	Details of impact.	Impact level.

<b>2 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</b>		
<b>Good relations category</b>	<b>Details of policy impact</b>	<b>Level of impact minor/major/none</b>
<b>Religious belief</b>		
<b>Political opinion</b>		
<b>Racial group</b>		

<b>3 Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?</b>		
<b>Section 75 category</b>	<b>If Yes, provide details</b>	<b>If No, provide reasons</b>
<b>Religious belief</b>		We have consulted on the good relations measures outlined in the action plan and taken into account responses from consultees as part of the public consultation. Progress on the actions in the plan will be kept under review.

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<b>Political opinion</b>		As above
<b>Racial group</b>		As above

**4. 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?

The Draft Good Relations Action Plan was developed following internal consultation with relevant business areas across the Assembly, including Outreach, the Education Service, the Speaker's Office and the Communications Office.

The action plan was subject to a full public consultation which ran for 14 weeks, from 16 March 2016 to 10 June 2016.

Invitations to respond to the consultation were sent to all Members, party support staff and Secretariat staff, as well as to equality consultees from organisations across Northern Ireland.

## 5 Disability Duties

Consider whether the policy:

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

[Click here to enter text.](#)

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

[Click here to enter text.](#)

### 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.

While the Good Relations Action Plan is concerned with religious belief, political opinion and racial group, the Assembly Commission recognises that none of the section 75 categories operates in silos and that people have multiple identities. Where issues identified in the action plan impact on other equality categories, appropriate action will be taken to ensure these issues are addressed.

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### Part 3 Screening decision

1. 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'** ie the likely impact is none and no further action is required

**'Screened out' with mitigation** ie 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)** ie the likely impact is major and the policy will now be subject to an EQIA

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

Click here to enter text.

3. 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.

Click here to enter text.

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

Click here to enter text.

**5. 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.

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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:

A monitoring report will be provided to SMG and the Commission every six months, which will chart progress against actions in the Good Relations Action Plan. The Good Relations Action Plan is a fluid document, and actions can be added to it over its lifetime. Changes to the action plan will be included in the monitoring reports.

A survey of visitors will be carried out three times a year, and data will be collated by the Assembly's research staff. This data will be presented to SMG and the Commission as part of the monitoring reports.

## 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
Approved by:		

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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.

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.

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.

## 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

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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.