

Equality Screening Template – Section 75 of Northern Ireland Act 1998

Please complete the coversheet details below:

Policy title: Department for the Economy (DfE) New Ways of Working (NWW)

Decision (delete as appropriate)

Policy screened out **with** mitigation or an alternative policy adopted

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Content

Part 1. Policy scoping – asks public authorities to provide details about the policy, procedure, practice and/or decision being screened and what available evidence you have gathered to help make an assessment of the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

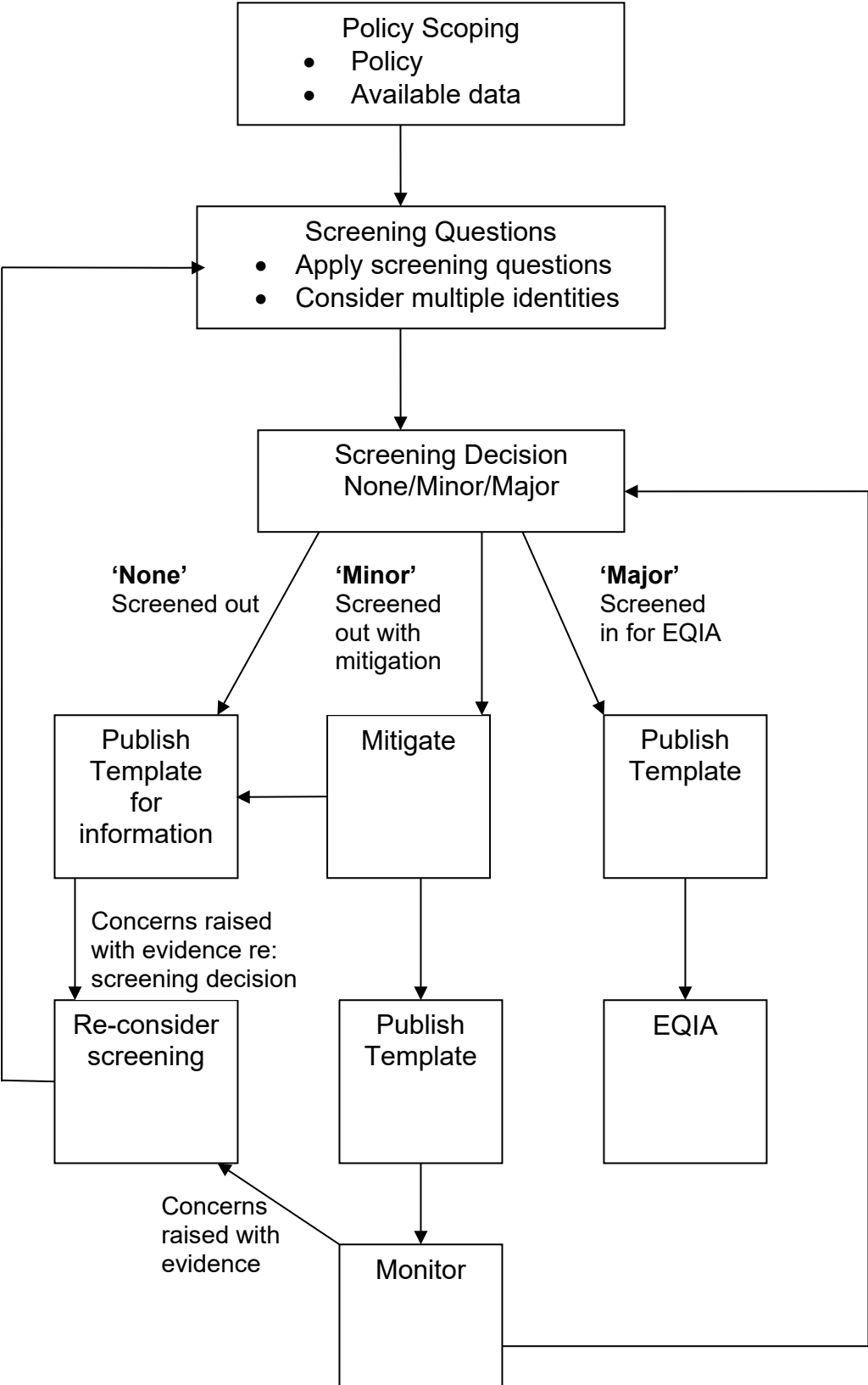
Part 2. Screening questions – asks about the extent of the likely impact of the policy on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories. Details of the groups consulted and the level of assessment of the likely impact. This includes consideration of multiple identity and good relations issues.

Part 3. Screening decision – guides the public authority to reach a screening decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA), or to introduce measures to mitigate the likely impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Part 4. Monitoring – provides guidance to public authorities on monitoring for adverse impact and broader monitoring.

Part 5. Approval and authorisation – verifies the public authority's approval of a screening decision by a senior manager responsible for the policy.

Flowchart for the equality screening process and decision.



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 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.

Public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

Information about the policy

Name of the policy

Department for the Economy New Ways of Working

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

New

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

- (a) To reconfigure DfE's accommodation to provide an agile working environment for staff and facilitate New Ways of Working including hybrid working;
- (b) Whilst maintaining a service first approach, provide flexibility for staff depending on the function and nature of job roles;
- (c) To provide the necessary documentation, guidance, information technology and equipment to enable staff to work flexibly whilst respecting the parameters of existing policies; and
- (d) To retain and build on beneficial practices adopted during the Covid 19 pandemic and maximise the benefits of New Ways of Working for the NICS and staff.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy? Yes

If so, explain how.

Yes, people with a disability and those with dependants might benefit as it will provide more flexibility in how they can carry out their role. There is also a benefit for staff who live long distances from their offices and customers who live in remote areas which could potentially benefit all Section 75 groups. As more information is made accessible on-line, this could be of benefit to customers with a disability or from racial groups, for example, through the use of specialist software and on-line translation tools.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Department of Finance wrote the Hybrid Working policy for the NICS and the NWW Project Team are implementing the practical out-workings of the policy within the Department for the Economy.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The Department of Finance owns the Hybrid Working policy and the NWW Project Team are implementing the practical out-workings of the policy within the Department for the Economy.

Implementation factors

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

If yes, are they (please delete as appropriate):

Financial – dependent on provision of sufficient budget to purchase IT equipment and any additional requirements for premises or facilities management.

Legislative – The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Health and Safety legislation.

Other, please specify: Departmental Health and Safety policies.

Main stakeholders affected

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

staff
service users
other public sector organisations
voluntary/community/trade unions

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- what are they?
Hybrid Working policy and Health and Safety policies.
- who owns them?
Department of Finance and Department for the Economy respectively.

Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data. The Commission has produced this guide to [signpost to S75 data](#).

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Information has been gathered for each of the Section 75 categories from a range of sources including interdepartmental working groups, a Pause and Connect event for DfE staff, Inform You events for DfE staff, Pulse Surveys, the DfE H&S Advisor, the NWW Steering Group, Trade Union Side, the NIPSA appointed H&S representative, staff with disabilities, and branch meetings. Feedback has been provided both verbally and in writing providing information on the potential impact of the NWW policy. Where specific information in relation to a Section 75 category has been provided, this has been included below.

Religious belief evidence/information:

On the basis of consultation as described and information gathering, NWW has no impact on this category.

Political Opinion evidence/information:

On the basis of consultation as described and information gathering, NWW has no impact on this category.

Racial Group evidence/information:

Feedback from the NWW Steering Group suggested that, for DfE customers, if services move on-line, they may be less accessible for those with language barriers.

Age evidence/information:

Feedback from the NWW Steering Group suggested that, for DfE customers, if services move on-line, they may be less accessible to elderly people.

Marital Status evidence/information:

Feedback from the NWW Steering Group suggested that a shift towards hybrid working may impact men/women, who may or may not be married, who have dependent children, more than those who do not.

Sexual Orientation evidence/information:

On the basis of consultation as described and information gathering, NWW has no impact on this category.

Men and Women generally evidence/information:

Feedback from the NWW Steering Group suggested that a shift towards hybrid working may impact men/women who have dependent children more than those who do not.

Disability evidence/information:

Information from the DfE H&S Advisor, the NWW Steering Group and the NIPSA appointed H&S representative indicated that reasonable adjustments will be required at both home and office locations. Particular consideration of the most suitable type of workstyle agreement may need to be given by line managers for individuals with a disability. If services move on-line, whilst there may be a possibility that they may be less accessible for customers with a disability, there could also be significant advantages for those with a disability.

Dependants evidence/information:

Feedback from the NWW Steering Group suggested that a shift towards hybrid working may impact those who have dependent children or who live at home with dependants in other categories, e.g. elderly or disabled dependants, more than those who do not.

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision?

Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below:

Religious belief

N/A

Political Opinion

N/A

Racial Group

Alternative support services may need to be considered for customers with language barriers who are trying to access on-line information.

Age

Alternative support services may need to be considered for elderly customers having difficulties accessing on-line information.

Marital status

N/A

Sexual orientation

N/A

Men and Women Generally

Requirement for men and women to make suitable arrangements for dependants however this is no different to the way of working pre-Covid.

Disability

Provision of reasonable adjustments and suitability of equipment and software being installed and utilised in both home and office locations. Workstyle agreements to be discussed on an individual basis with line managers. Alternative support services may need to be considered for customers with a disability who are trying to access on-line information.

Dependants

Requirement to make suitable arrangements for dependants however this is no different to the way of working pre-Covid.

Part 2. Screening questions

Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the Screening Questions 1-4, which follow.

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

If the public authority's 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 the public authority's 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.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

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?

Please provide details of the likely policy impacts and determine the level of impact for each Section 75 categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**: N/A

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: N/A

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:

There may be a requirement to translate information published on-line by DfE into different languages although this may be easier with on-line translation tools.

What is the level of impact? Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**:

There may be a requirement to provide support or departmental information in an alternative format to customers if, for example, elderly people are having difficulties accessing on-line information. Currently, requests from the public for information in an alternative format are already considered and this will continue to be the case in the future.

What is the level of impact? Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**: N/A

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**: N/A

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**: N/A

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**:

Provides more flexibility with regard to work location for staff with a disability and the opportunity to introduce positive changes in relation to IT and office equipment.

What is the level of impact? Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**: N/A
What is the level of impact? None

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories? Yes

Detail opportunities of how this policy could promote equality of opportunity for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

Religious Belief –

If Yes, provide details:

The DfE NWW Project Team is proactively engaging with relevant parties to consider ways to promote equality of opportunity and mitigate against inequality.

If No, provide reasons:

Political Opinion –

If Yes, provide details:

The DfE NWW Project Team is proactively engaging with relevant parties to consider ways to promote equality of opportunity and mitigate against inequality.

If No, provide reasons:

Racial Group –

If Yes, provide details:

Opportunity for more information to be accessible to those with language barriers.

If No, provide reasons:

Age –

If Yes, provide details:

Information may need to be made available in a different format to customers, e.g. printed or via telephone, for those who have difficulty accessing on-line information.

If No, provide reasons:

Marital Status –

If Yes, provide details:

The DfE NWW Project Team is proactively engaging with relevant parties to consider ways to promote equality of opportunity and mitigate against inequality.

If No, provide reasons:

Sexual Orientation –

If Yes, provide details:

The DfE NWW Project Team is proactively engaging with relevant parties to consider ways to promote equality of opportunity and mitigate against inequality.

If No, provide reasons:

Men and Women generally –

If Yes, provide details:

The DfE NWW Project Team is proactively engaging with relevant parties to consider ways to promote equality of opportunity and mitigate against inequality.

If No, provide reasons:

Disability –

If Yes, provide details:

Opportunity to influence decision making on software used, equipment installed and working practices.

If No, provide reasons:

Dependants –

If Yes, provide details:

The DfE NWW Project Team is proactively engaging with relevant parties to consider ways to promote equality of opportunity and mitigate against inequality.

If No, provide reasons:

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Please provide details of the likely policy impact and determine the level of impact for each of the categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**: N/A

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: N/A

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: N/A

What is the level of impact? None

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Detail opportunities of how this policy could better promote good relations for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

Religious Belief –

If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

The Department of Finance owns the Hybrid Working policy and the NWW Project Team are implementing the practical out-workings of the policy within the Department for the Economy.

Political Opinion –

If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

The Department of Finance owns the Hybrid Working policy and the NWW Project Team are implementing the practical out-workings of the policy within the Department for the Economy.

Racial Group –

If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

The Department of Finance owns the Hybrid Working policy and the NWW Project Team are implementing the practical out-workings of the policy within the Department for the Economy.

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

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.*) No

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

Part 3. Screening decision

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

The DfE NWW Project Team is proactively engaging with relevant parties to consider ways to promote equality of opportunity and mitigate against inequality.

Although service users and other organisations and departments who have contact with DfE will be impacted as services may be delivered differently than previously, e.g. on-line as opposed to face-to-face meetings, electronic forms etc, there is no distinction irrespective of Section 75 category status.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced – please provide details.

The level of impact for the Section 75 categories is considered to be minor for some categories however, some of the impacts may be positive and work is ongoing to mitigate any negative impacts.

Consideration is being given to the type of hardware, software, furniture and facilities being put in place to take account of the needs of all staff including those in Section 75 categories. Processes, guidance and training are also being considered with the view to ensuring suitability for all staff including those in Section 75 categories.

Arrangements for reasonable adjustments are already in place and requests will continue to be considered on an on-going basis. Currently, requests for information in an alternative format are already considered and this will continue to be the case in the future.

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

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on

equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

Mitigation

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

The level of impact for the Section 75 categories is considered to be minor for some categories however, some of the impacts may be positive and work is ongoing to mitigate any negative impacts.

Consideration is being given to the type of hardware, software, furniture and facilities being put in place to take account of the needs of all staff including those in Section 75 categories. Processes, guidance and training are also being considered with the view to ensuring suitability for all staff including those in Section 75 categories.

Arrangements for reasonable adjustments are already in place and requests will continue to be considered on an on-going basis. Currently, requests for information in an alternative format are already considered and this will continue to be the case in the future.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations? No

If so, **give the reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

Timetabling and prioritising

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 –

Social need –

Effect on people's daily lives –

Relevance to a public authority's functions –

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 public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

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

If yes, please provide details.

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

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

NWW will be introduced via a pilot exercise for specific business areas in two different buildings during which lessons learned will be collated and any necessary remedial action undertaken before proceeding with introducing NWW across the Department.

The NWW Steering Group provides a conduit for all DfE staff to provide feedback to the NWW Project Team.

Other opportunities for staff to provide direct feedback may also be considered in the future, e.g. further Pause and Connect event, further Inform You sessions and/or follow-up Pulse Survey.

Customers can provide feedback by directly emailing a member of staff with whom they have been dealing, by contacting dfemail@economy-ni.gov.uk or by writing to the Department for the Economy, Netherleigh, Massey Avenue, Belfast BT4 2JP.

Screened by: Denise Wilson
Position/Job Title: Deputy Principal
Business Area/Branch: Corporate Services
Date: 14 October 2021

Approved by: Chris McConkey
Position/Job Title: Head of Corporate Services
Business Area/Branch: Corporate Services
Date: 14 October 2021

Note: A copy of the Screening Template, for each policy screened should be 'signed off' and approved by a senior manager responsible for the policy, made easily accessible on the public authority's website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.