



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Mánnystrie o tha Laa

DOJ Section 75

EQUALITY SCREENING FORM

Title of Policy: Good Character References in Criminal Proceedings –
Proposals for Reform

The Legal Background – Under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Department is required **to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:**

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

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

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

Introduction

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.

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: Good Character References in Criminal Proceedings –
Proposals for Reform

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy? This is a new policy.

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

The law requires a court, when determining a person's sentence, to consider mitigating factors, which can include evidence of the accused's good character. This can take the form of a reference provided by an employer, family member or community figure. Whilst this evidence can lead to a reduction in sentence, it is not guaranteed, and any weight assigned to the good character of the defendant at sentencing will be dependent on the facts of the case and the seriousness of the offence.

The use of good character evidence, both during a criminal trial and at sentencing, is an issue that the Department planned to consider as part of its Review of Sentencing Policy, launched on 14 January 2026. Any policies developed by the Review will be subject to public consultation, with a view to informing legislative proposals for the next mandate. Subject to resources, it is anticipated that public consultation on any such policy proposals will take place in 2027.

However, in response to growing concerns about the appropriateness of good character references at sentencing, particularly for sexual offences, the Minister has asked the Department to urgently consider how this matter could be addressed

during the current Assembly mandate.

The proposals developed by the Department for consultation take account of the current position in Northern Ireland and in other jurisdictions and are designed as proposed solutions to some of the issues and challenges that have arisen.

If this consultation exercise identifies a simple legislative change that could have an impact on this issue, the Minister will consider the possibility of bringing forward an amendment to the law for consideration during this Assembly mandate

**Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?
If so, explain how.**

The proposals for reform have arisen from a desire to improve the experience of victims of crime during sentencing hearings, particularly victims of sexual offences. Whilst it may be of particular benefit to women generally, as a high proportion of victims of sexual offences are women, the policy is intended to benefit all victims of crime.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

This consultation on policy proposals was initiated by the Department of Justice.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The Department of Justice owns the policy proposals and, dependent on the outcome of the consultation, will develop and commence legislation. If legislative change is enacted, implementation will be taken forward by the Northern Ireland Court Service (NICTS) and the Judiciary.

Implementation factors

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

If yes, are they (please delete as appropriate)

Financial – introduction will be dependent on the availability of resources.

Legislative – introduction will be subject to the will of the Assembly.

other, please specify:

- responses to the consultation will determine the final shape of the policy; and
- the potential for legislative change during this Assembly Mandate will be dependent upon the progress of the current legislative programme.

Main stakeholders affected

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

Staff – PPS, NICTS, Department of Justice,

service users – victims, witnesses, solicitors

other, please specify: the judiciary

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- what are they?

The Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc.) Bill.

The Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill.

- who owns them?

The Department of Justice.

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.

The Department has considered population and organisational level sources of information, including:

- Information from the 2021 Census in Northern Ireland, published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)¹;
- NI Courts and Tribunals Service Statistics relating to prosecutions convictions²;
- Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland – 1998/99 to 2024/25 (PSNI)³.
- The Northern Ireland Victim and Witness Survey (NIVAWS) 2022⁴

Religious belief evidence / information:

1. The NI Census in 2021 provided recorded the population of Northern Ireland at the time as 1,903,175, with religious belief broken down as follows:

Category	Population	%
Catholic	805,151	42.31%
Presbyterian Church in Ireland	316,103	16.61%
Church of Ireland	219,788	11.55%
Methodist Church in Ireland	44,728	2.35%
Other Christian (including Christian related)	130,377	6.85%
Other religion	25,519	1.34%
No religion	330,983	17.39%
Religion not stated	30,529	1.60%

¹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/2021-census/results/main-statistics>

² <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/prosecution-and-conviction-statistics>

³ <https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics>

⁴ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/victim-and-witness-experience-northern-ireland-criminal-justice-system-key-findings-202223>

2. The NI Victim and Witness Survey 2022 provides a breakdown of respondents in terms of religion, as follows:

Religion	Number	%
Roman Catholic	243	42%
Presbyterian Church in Ireland	64	11%
Church of Ireland	51	9%
Methodist Church in Ireland	10	2%
Other religion	101	17%
No religion	113	19%

Political Opinion evidence / information:

1. No evidence has been identified which is of relevance to this screening exercise.

Racial Group evidence / information:

1. The population of Northern Ireland at the time of the NI Census in 2021 was 1,903,175, and 3.45% (65,604) of the usual resident population belonged to minority ethnic groups. The overall population breakdown was as follows:

Category	Population	%
White	1,837,575	96.55%
Irish Traveller	2,609	0.14%
Roma	1,529	0.08%
Indian	9,881	0.52%
Chinese	9,495	0.50%
Filipino	4,451	0.23%
Pakastani	1,596	0.08%
Arab	1,817	0.10%
Other Asian	5,244	0.28%
Black African	8,069	0.42%
Mixed	14,382	0.76%
Other ethnicities	3,568	0.19%

2. The NI Victim and Witness Survey 2022 provides a breakdown of respondents in terms of ethnicity, as follows:

Ethnicity	Number	%
White	572	96%
Indian	4	1%
Black African	4	1%
Chinese	1	< 1%
Roma	1	< 1%
Filipino	1	< 1%
Mixed ethnic group	11	2%

Age evidence / information:

1. The population of Northern Ireland at the time of the NI Census in 2021 was 1,903,175, broken down as follows:

Age band	Population	%
0-4 years	113,820	5.98%
5-9 years	124,475	6.54%
10-14 years	126,918	6.67%
15-19 years	113,203	5.95%
20-24 years	111,386	5.85%
25-29 years	116,409	6.12%
30-34 years	126,050	6.62%
35-39 years	127,313	6.69%
40-44 years	122,163	6.42%
45-49 years	121,670	6.39%
50-54 years	130,967	6.88%
55-59 years	129,276	6.79%
60-64 years	113,049	5.94%
65-69 years	93,464	4.91%
70-74 years	83,467	4.39%
75-79 years	66,377	3.49%
80-84 years	43,776	2.30%
85-89 years	25,879	1.36%
90+ years	13,512	0.71%

2. In 2024, statistics produced by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service broke down prosecutions and convictions by age, as follows:

Table 4a: Prosecutions and convictions at Crown Court by age band of defendant 2024

Age band	Convictions	Conviction %	No Conviction	No Conviction %	Total Findings	Total Findings %
10 - 17	1	0.1	0	0.0	1	0.1
18 - 24	194	12.8	26	11.0	220	12.5
25 - 29	259	17.0	28	11.8	287	16.3
30 - 39	541	35.6	55	23.2	596	33.9
40 - 49	272	17.9	46	19.4	318	18.1
50 - 59	164	10.8	39	16.5	203	11.5
60 & over	85	5.6	42	17.7	127	7.2
Not known	5	0.3	1	0.4	6	0.3
Total	1,521	100.0	237	100.0	1,758	100.0

Table 4b: Prosecutions and convictions at magistrates' courts by age band of defendant 2024

Age band	Convictions	Conviction %	No Conviction	No Conviction %	Total Findings	Total Findings %
10 - 17	506	2.2	159	3.0	665	2.3
18 - 24	3,716	15.8	616	11.5	4,332	15.0
25 - 29	3,681	15.7	594	11.1	4,275	14.8
30 - 39	7,688	32.8	1,575	29.3	9,263	32.1
40 - 49	4,351	18.5	1,247	23.2	5,598	19.4
50 - 59	2,199	9.4	667	12.4	2,866	9.9
60 & over	1,256	5.4	480	8.9	1,736	6.0
Not known	63	0.3	31	0.6	94	0.3
Total	23,460	100.0	5,369	100.0	28,829	100.0

Table 4c: Prosecutions and convictions at all courts by age band of defendant 2024

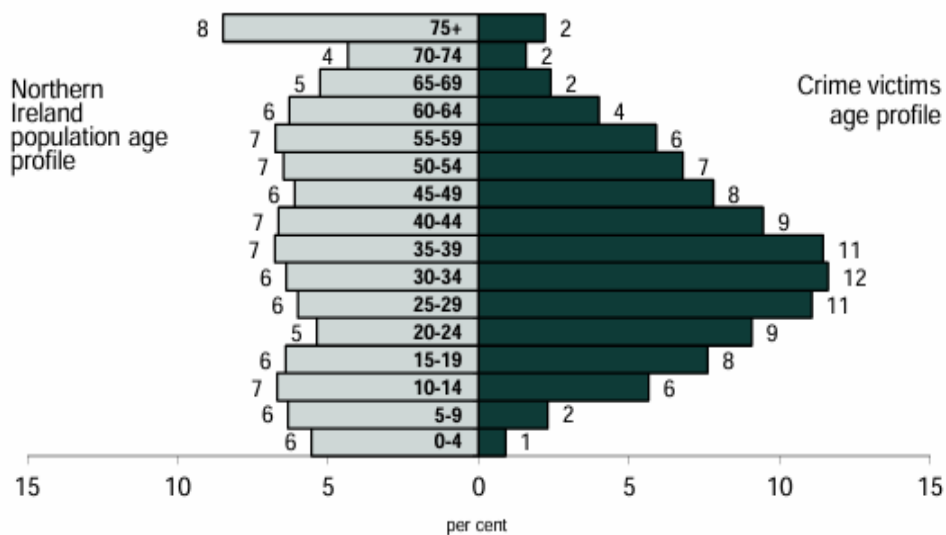
Age band	Conviction	Conviction %	No Conviction	No Conviction %	Total Findings	Total Findings %
10 - 17	507	2.0	159	2.8	666	2.2
18 - 24	3,910	15.7	642	11.5	4,552	14.9
25 - 29	3,940	15.8	622	11.1	4,562	14.9
30 - 39	8,229	32.9	1,630	29.1	9,859	32.2
40 - 49	4,623	18.5	1,293	23.1	5,916	19.3
50 - 59	2,363	9.5	706	12.6	3,069	10.0
60 & over	1,341	5.4	522	9.3	1,863	6.1
Not known	68	0.3	32	0.6	100	0.3
Total	24,981	100.0	5,606	100.0	30,587	100.0

3. In 2024/25, trends in police recorded crime demonstrated the following in respect of the age of the victim:

7.1 Age profile 2024/25: age of victim

Thirteen percent of victims were persons aged under 18, 80 per cent were aged 18-64 and six per cent were aged 65 or over. Age information was unavailable for less than one per cent of all person victims. Figure 7.2 compares the age profile of crime victims to that of the Northern Ireland population for 2024/25.

Figure 7.2 Age profile of crime victims compared with Northern Ireland population profile, 2024/25



4. The NI Victim and Witness Survey 2022 provides a breakdown of respondents in terms of age, as follows:

Age	Number	%
18-24	57	9%
25-34	142	24%
35-44	136	23%
45-54	108	18%
55-64	96	16%
65+	64	11%

Marital Status evidence / information:

1. The NI Census in 2021 recorded the adult population of Northern Ireland at the time as 1,514,743, with marital status broken down as follows:

Category	Population	%
Single (never married or never registered a civil partnership)	576,708	38.07%
Married	690,509	45.59%
In a civil partnership	2,742	0.18%
Separated (but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership)	57,272	3.78%
Divorced or formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved	91,128	6.02%
Widowed or surviving partner from a civil partnership	96,384	6.36%

2. The NI Victim and Witness Survey 2022 provides a breakdown of respondents in terms of marital status, as follows:

Status	Number	%
Single	264	44%
Married	239	40%
Separated	20	3%
Divorced	30	5%
Widowed	14	2%
Separated	1	< 1%
Formerly in a civil partnership	1	< 1%
In a civil partnership	7	1%
Other	26	4%

Sexual Orientation evidence / information:

1. The NI Census in 2021 recorded the adult population of Northern Ireland at the time as 1,514,743, with sexual orientation broken down as follows:

Category	Population	%
Straight or heterosexual	1,363,859	90.04%
Gay or lesbian	17,713	1.17%
Bisexual	11,306	0.75%
Other sexual orientation	2,597	0.17%
Prefer not to say	69,307	4.58%
Not stated	49,961	3.30%

2. The NI Victim and Witness Survey 2022 provides a breakdown of respondents in terms of sexual orientation, as follows:

Sexual Orientation	Number	%
Heterosexual/straight	556	95%
Gay/lesbian	19	3%
Bi-sexual	7	1%
Other	3	1%

Men & Women generally evidence / information:

1. The NI Census in 2021 recorded the population of Northern Ireland at the time as 1,903,175, with sex broken down as follows:

Sex	Population	%
Male	936,132	49.19%
Female	967,043	50.81%

2. In 2024, statistics produced by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service broke down prosecutions and convictions by sex, as follows:

Table 3a: Prosecutions and convictions in Crown Courts in Northern Ireland by gender of defendant 2024

Crown Court	Male	Male %	Female	Female %	Other [note 2]	Other %	Total Number
Conviction	1,363	89.6	154	10.1	4	0.3	1,521
No conviction	199	84.0	37	15.6	1	0.4	237
Total findings	1,562	88.9	191	10.9	5	0.3	1,758
% convictions	87.3		80.6		80.0		86.5

Table 3b: Prosecutions and convictions in Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland by gender of defendant 2024

Magistrates' courts	Male	Male %	Female	Female %	Other [note 2]	Other %	Total Number
Conviction	18,505	78.9	4,892	20.9	63	0.3	23,460
No conviction	4,364	81.3	966	18.0	39	0.7	5,369
Total findings	22,869	79.3	5,858	20.3	102	0.4	28,829
% convictions	80.9		83.5		61.8		81.4

Table 3c: Prosecutions and convictions in all courts in Northern Ireland by gender of defendant 2024

All courts	Male	Male %	Female	Female %	Other [note 2]	Other %	Total Number
Conviction	19,868	79.5	5,046	20.2	67	0.3	24,981
No conviction	4,563	81.4	1,003	17.9	40	0.7	5,606
Total findings	24,431	79.9	6,049	19.8	107	0.3	30,587
% convictions	81.3		83.4		62.6		81.7

3. In 2024/25, trends in police recorded crime demonstrated the following in respect of the gender of the 63,787 victims of crime recorded that year:
 - 32,271 females (50.6%);
 - 31,355 males (49.2%); and
 - 161 of unknown gender (0.25%).
4. The NI Victim and Witness Survey 2022 provides a breakdown of respondents in terms of gender, as follows:

Gender	Number	%
Male	339	56%
Female	265	44%

Disability evidence / information:

1. The NI Census in 2021 recorded the population of Northern Ireland at the time as 1,903,175, and collected data on long-term health problem or disability, as follows:

Category	Population	%
Day-to-day activities limited a lot	217,964	11.45%
Day-to-day activities limited a little	245,057	12.88%
Day-to-day activities not limited	1,440,158	75.67%

2. The NI Victim and Witness Survey 2022 provides a breakdown of respondents in terms of disability, as follows:

Respondent had a disability	Number	%
Yes	119	20%
No	485	80%

Dependants' evidence / information:

1. The NI Victim and Witness Survey 2022 provides a breakdown of respondents in terms of dependents, as follows:

Child Dependents	Number	%
Yes	246	41%
No	358	59%

Personal Responsibility for a dependent older person	Number	%
Yes	59	10%
No	545	90%

Personal responsibility for a person with long term physical or mental health or disability	Number	%
Yes	94	16%
No	510	84%

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:

In relation to these particular policy proposals, no different needs, experiences and priorities on the grounds of religious belief have been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Political Opinion:

In relation to these particular policy proposals, no different needs, experiences and priorities on the grounds of political opinion have been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Racial Group:

In relation to these particular policy proposals, no different needs, experiences and priorities on the grounds of racial group have been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Age:

In relation to these particular policy proposals, no different needs, experiences and priorities on the grounds of age have been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Marital status:

In relation to these particular policy proposals, no different needs, experiences and priorities on the grounds of marital status have been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Sexual orientation:

In relation to these particular policy proposals, no different needs, experiences and priorities on the grounds of sexual orientation have been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Men and Women Generally:

In relation to these particular policy proposals, no different needs, experiences and priorities on the grounds of men and women generally have been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Disability:

In relation to these particular policy proposals, no different needs, experiences and priorities on the grounds of disability have been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Dependants:

In relation to these particular policy proposals, no different needs, experiences and priorities on the grounds of dependents have been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

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 questions 1-4 which are detailed below.

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 S75 categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**: (insert text here)

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None

(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: (insert text here)

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None

(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: (insert text here)

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None

(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**: (insert text here)

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None

(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**: (insert text here)

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None

(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**:

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None

(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**: (insert text here)

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None

(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**: (insert text here)

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None

(Underline as appropriate)

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

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None (Underline as appropriate)

2. **Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?** Yes/No

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: N/A

If No, provide reasons: Opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for this category have not been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Political Opinion - If Yes, provide details: N/A

If No, provide reasons: Opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for this category have not been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Racial Group - If Yes, provide details: N/A

If No, provide reasons: Opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for this category have not been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Age - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: Opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for this category have not been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Marital Status - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: Opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for this category have not been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Sexual Orientation - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: Opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for this category have not been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Men and Women generally - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: Opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for this category have not been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Disability - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: Opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for this category have not been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

Dependants - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: Opportunities to promote equality of opportunity for this category have not been identified. The policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category.

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**: No impact has been identified on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group have not been identified.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: As above.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: As above.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

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: Opportunities to promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group have not been identified.

Political Opinion - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: As above.

Racial Group - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: As above.

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 impact identified.

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 policy options for consultation would apply in all relevant cases, regardless of S75 category. Based on the information available, the Department does not consider the policy proposals will impact adversely on equality of opportunity of any of the section 75 groups.

Therefore, the decision has been taken to screen the policy out and an equality impact assessment is not considered necessary at this time.

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.

There is no need to mitigate the policy or to have an alternative policy.

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

N/A

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.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

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

N/A

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 [Author pick 1, 2 or 3 if a full EQIA is to take place]

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.

Further advice on monitoring can be found at: [ECNI Monitoring Guidance for Public Authorities](#)

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Alan Weir
Position/Job Title: Grade 7
Date: 21 September 2026

Approved by: Andrew Dawson
Position/Job Title: Director, CJPLD
Date: 21/9/26