

# Screening flowchart and template

*(taken from Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for public authorities April 2010 (Appendix 1)).*

## 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.

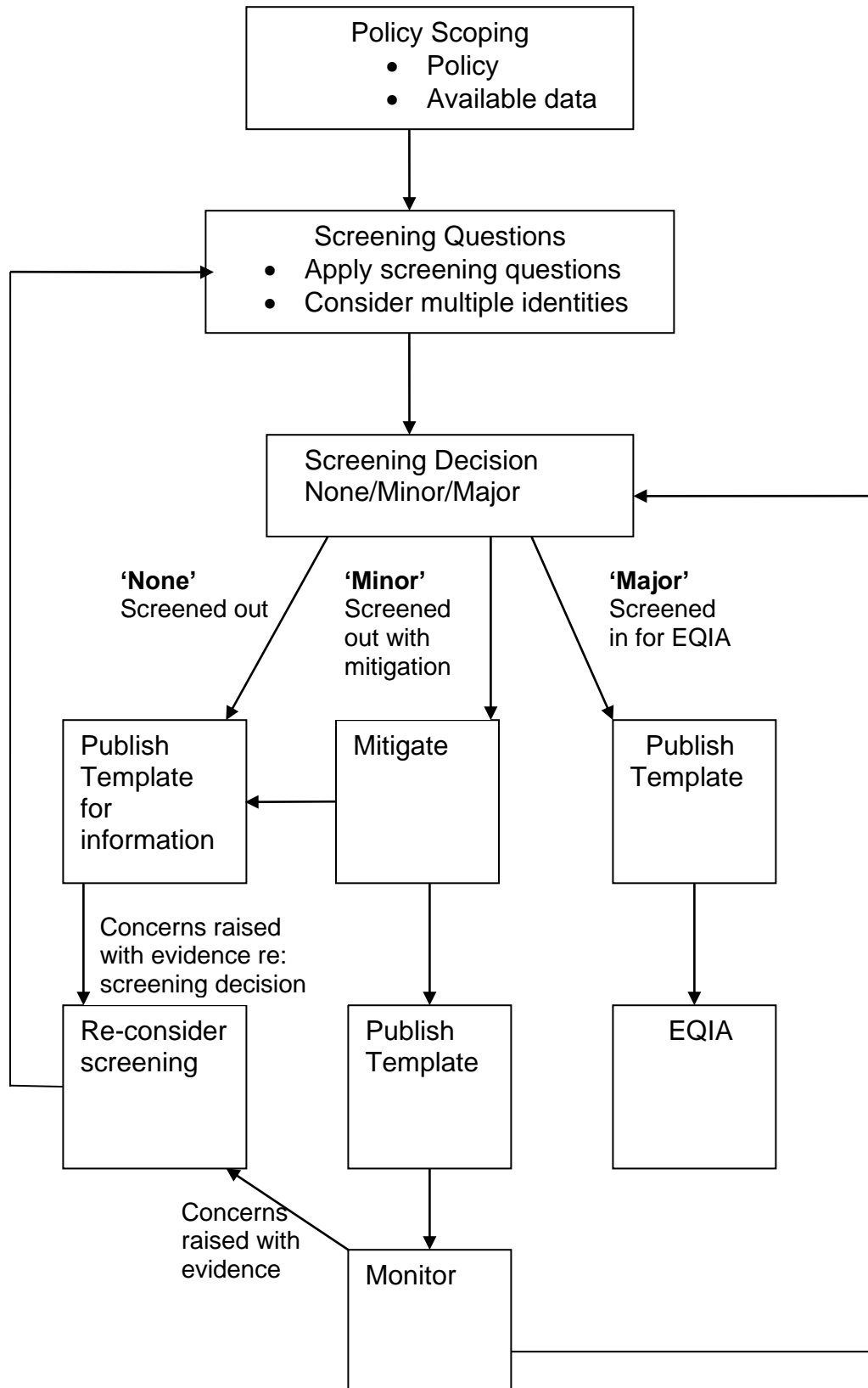
**Part 2. Screening questions** – asks about the extent of the likely impact of the policy on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories. Details of the groups consulted and the level of assessment of the likely impact. This includes consideration of multiple identity and good relations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

A screening flowchart is provided overleaf.



## 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

*Equality Scheme 2021-2026 and associated action plans – updated for 2025/26*

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

*Revised*

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

*To communicate Sport NI continued commitment to fulfil its Section 75 statutory duties and commit necessary resources to ensure Section 75 are complied with and that the equality scheme is implemented effectively, efficiently and on time.*

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

If so, explain how.

*All Section 75 categories are expected to benefit from the policy as it is Sport NI's policy to fulfil Section 75 statutory duties across all our functions (including service provision, employment and procurement through the implementation of the equality scheme.*

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

*Policy and Insights Manager – updated version 2025/26*

Who owns and who implements the policy?

*CEO*



## Implementation factors

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

If yes, are they

☒ financial, any general budgetary reductions to Sport NI

☐ legislative

☐ other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_ ☒

## Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- what are they?  
**Corporate Plan 2021-26**  
**EDI Strategy and Action Plans**
- who owns them?  
**Sport NI**

## 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.

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

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information
Religious belief	<p>Corporate plan EQIA <a href="#">Equality-Impact-Assessment-Sport-NI-Corporate-Plan.pdf</a></p> <p>An examination of the granularity of updated research pertaining to classified groups (many of which equate to S75 groups), and programme data has been undertaken, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continuous Household Survey – sport</li><li>• Young People Behaviours and Attitudes Survey</li><li>• Race and Racial Inequality in Sport Research</li><li>• Children’s Sport and Physical Activity Survey</li><li>• Kids Life and Times and Young People Life and Times</li><li>• UK Coaching Survey</li><li>• Outdoor Motivations Survey</li><li>• A desk based review of research on women and sport and evidence base repository and analysis</li><li>• Health Inequality Report</li><li>• NIMDS social deprivation Report</li><li>• S75 monitoring data from programmes and projects</li></ul>
Political opinion	As above, although there is limited research data available on political opinion.
Racial group	As above but more specifically a quantitative and qualitative study of race and racial inequality in sport.
Age	<i>As above.</i>
Marital status	<i>As above.</i>
Sexual orientation	<i>As above, although limited data exists on LGBTQI+ community through under declaration on forms and lack of classification in public longitudinal research. This was included in CSPPA and qualitative information on lived experience has been sought from representative bodies during engagement and consultation phases.</i>
Men and women generally	<i>As above.</i>

Disability	As above.
Dependants	As above.

## 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 for each of the Section 75 categories

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious belief	<p>The 2023/24 Continuous Household Survey (CHS) provides the most recent data on participation in sport across different religious backgrounds in Northern Ireland. According to the survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 46% of people identifying as Catholic participated in sport at least once in the previous seven days.</li> <li>• 47% of people identifying as Protestant participated in sport at least once in the previous seven days.</li> <li>• 56% of people identifying as 'Other' or having no religion participated in sport at least once in the previous seven days.</li> </ul> <p>Source: <a href="#">Experience of Sport by Adults in Northern Ireland 2023/24</a></p> <p><i>Research Insights and Consultation Feedback</i></p> <p>Evidence from the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for Sport NI's Corporate Plan references a 2016 study (Mitchell, Somerville &amp; Hargie) on Sport and Social Exclusion. This research found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong public support (86%) for the principle of sport as a peacebuilding tool in Northern Ireland.</li> <li>• Both Protestant and Catholic communities expressed a desire for sports to become more mixed in terms of participation and support bases.</li> </ul> <p>Source: Sport NI Corporate Plan EQIA</p> <p>Through Sport NI's extensive public consultation for the 2021-2026 Corporate Plan, further religious and cultural considerations were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious and cultural practices impact participation, particularly for some women and girls from specific faith backgrounds.</li> <li>• Issues raised included the need for: Female-only sessions for activities such as gym classes and swimming. Private changing facilities for those unable to use communal spaces.</li> <li>• The need for dedicated development officers to support participation within culturally diverse communities, helping sustain engagement and facilitate progression within sport.</li> </ul> <p><i>Inclusive Provision and Facility Access</i></p> <p>The Department for Communities (DfC) screening of the Active Living Strategy reinforces these priorities, highlighting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility access at times that respect religious observances.</li> <li>• Programming of gender-specific sessions to align with religious and cultural requirements.</li> </ul> <p>Sport NI also acknowledges that community background continues to influence sporting preferences and participation. This reality should inform</p>

	<p>the allocation of resources and the design of inclusive programmes. Further, Sport NI respects the personal choice of athletes in relation to national representation, recognising the diverse identities within Northern Ireland's sporting landscape.</p>
Political opinion	<p><i>Historical Context and Evolving Trends</i></p> <p>The EQIA for Sport NI's Corporate Plan references evidence (Mitchell, Somerville &amp; Hargie, 2016) that highlights the historical politicisation of sport in Northern Ireland, where certain sports became associated with particular political, religious and cultural identities. However, this research also found emerging evidence that the politicisation of sport may be gradually weakening, with some sports becoming more cross-community in character.</p> <p><i>Consultation Feedback and Strategic Priorities</i></p> <p>Through consultation on Sport NI's Corporate Plan (2021-2026) and the Department for Communities' Active Living Strategy, the following needs and experiences were identified for people of differing political opinions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neutral and accessible facilities: Facilities should be seen as welcoming to all and free from political or sectarian symbolism that could discourage participation.</li> <li>• Safe and inclusive environments: Participants highlighted the importance of feeling safe and secure when using facilities, venues, and open spaces.</li> <li>• Avoidance of territorial markings: Facilities should be free from flags, emblems, murals, or other territorial markers that could alienate potential users.</li> </ul> <p>Sport NI also recognises the importance of respecting personal choice in relation to international representation, acknowledging that some athletes may choose to represent Northern Ireland, Ireland, or the UK — and that this choice should be fully supported within the system.</p>
Racial group	<p><i>Current Evidence and Research Insights</i></p> <p>Sport NI, alongside the other Home Country Sports Councils, commissioned an extensive quantitative and qualitative research programme to better understand racial inequalities and racism in sport across the UK. This resulted in two key reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Tell Your Story" (2021) – capturing the lived experiences of people from ethnically diverse communities within sport, highlighting racism, microaggressions and structural inequalities.</li> <li>• "Tackling Racism and Racial Inequality in Sport" (TRARIIS) – bringing together existing data to map inequalities in participation, representation, and experience within sport and physical activity.</li> </ul> <p>Headline Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People from ethnically diverse backgrounds consistently report lower participation rates in sport and physical activity compared to White British/White Irish populations.</li> <li>• Structural and cultural barriers, including language barriers, lack of visible role models, experiences of overt racism and microaggressions, contribute to lower engagement.</li> <li>• Inequalities exist across all levels of sport – from grassroots</li> </ul>



participation through to elite performance and leadership roles.

- The research identified five common themes for action, which guide Sport NI's approach:

- Representation and Leadership
- Embedding Anti-Racism
- Education and Cultural Awareness
- Data and Insight
- Systems and Accountability

Sources:

- [Tell Your Story](#)
- [Tackling Racism and Racial Inequality in Sport](#)
- [5 Common Themes for Action](#)

#### Consultation Feedback and Community Insights

Through consultation on Sport NI's Corporate Plan 2021-2026 ('The Power of Sport'), alongside the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for the Plan, the needs, experiences and priorities of ethnically diverse communities were explored in greater detail.

Key messages from consultation included:

**Inclusive Culture:** Participants highlighted the need for a genuinely open, welcoming and inclusive sporting culture that actively promotes wellbeing and inclusion, rather than simply expecting participation.

**Cultural and Language Barriers:** Stakeholders proposed practical tools to overcome cultural and language barriers, including: A multi-language app to support signposting, tailored to different confidence levels, sports and local club options. Welcome videos from relatable participants to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions around sport being elite-focused.

**Tackling Racism and Bias:** Participants reported both blatant racism and subtle microaggressions in sporting environments. This aligns with the findings of the TRARIIS research and further emphasises the need for: Anti-racism training for clubs, officials and coaches. Stronger policies and enforcement mechanisms to challenge discrimination when it occurs.

**Targeted Development and Pathways:** Feedback highlighted the need for culturally diverse development officers, who can act as bridges between communities and the sporting system, helping build trust and sustained engagement.

**Affordability and Accessibility:** Cost was consistently raised as a barrier to participation. This includes not only membership fees, but also kit, equipment and transport costs. Clubs and governing bodies were encouraged to explore more flexible pricing structures and targeted outreach programmes to remove these barriers.

**Pathways to Leadership and Representation:** Feedback highlighted the lack of ethnically diverse representation within coaching, officiating and governance roles. Clear pathways to leadership were seen as essential, alongside targeted mentoring and outreach.

**'Who You Know' Culture:** A strong theme across consultations was frustration at the informal networks that often shape access to development and leadership opportunities within Northern Ireland sport. More transparent recruitment and targeted outreach to ethnically diverse communities were identified as a critical priority.

#### [Broader Strategic Alignment](#)

The Sport NI EQIA also referenced the Sport England "Sport for All" study

	<p>(2020), which provides further evidence that:  Different ethnic communities have diverse needs and preferences, which should inform programme design.  People's experiences are shaped by multiple factors, including age, gender, disability, faith, sexual orientation — meaning solutions must account for these intersecting identities.  Systemic change requires collective action across the whole sporting system, not just at club or governing body level.  Source: Sport for All: Why Ethnicity and Culture Matters</p>
Age	<p>Sport NI has reviewed a range of research and data to understand how age affects people's participation in sport and physical activity. Key sources include the 2023/24 Continuous Household Survey, the Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study (CSPPA), and the Kids Life and Times (KLT) and Young Life and Times (YLT) surveys.</p> <p><b>What we know from the data:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport participation declines as people get older, particularly between primary and post-primary school.</li> <li>• 17% of students aged 10-18 in Northern Ireland meet the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity.</li> <li>• Boys are more likely to meet this target than girls.</li> <li>• Participation rates are lower for children with disabilities and children from minority ethnic backgrounds.</li> <li>• 92% of primary pupils and 76% of post-primary pupils take part in school sport outside of PE at least once a week.</li> </ul> <p><b>What older people told us:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They want more adapted sports like walking football, table tennis and bowls.</li> <li>• Transport, costs and lack of local facilities are big barriers, especially in rural areas.</li> <li>• Better communication and promotion of activities is needed.</li> <li>• Feeling self-conscious about going to classes alone puts people off.</li> <li>• Health concerns, lack of changing facilities and digital barriers (for online classes) also affect participation.</li> <li>• There is strong support for fun, social and non-competitive activities.</li> <li>• Linking with initiatives like Age Friendly programmes and ensuring sports facilities meet accessibility standards was highlighted.</li> </ul> <p><b>What children and young people told us:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is strong demand for better quality PE in schools, with more focus on skill development and physical literacy, not just competition.</li> <li>• Early focus on competitive sports leaves many children feeling excluded.</li> <li>• School-to-club pathways need to improve to help children stay involved.</li> <li>• After-school activities are often unaffordable for low-income families.</li> <li>• Young people want a wider range of sports and more adventure-style activities, especially in rural areas.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport, self-confidence, and stereotypes around which sports are for boys or girls are barriers.</li> <li>• 17/18-year-olds feel there are fewer suitable activities for them locally.</li> </ul> <p><b>What parents, early years staff and community workers told us:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early years play and fundamental movement skills are crucial but often overlooked.</li> <li>• Many parents lack the knowledge or confidence to encourage physical activity at home.</li> <li>• Financial pressures, lack of local support, and digital exclusion all affect family participation.</li> <li>• Outdoor play and using natural environments should be encouraged, but weather is often seen as a barrier.</li> <li>• Costs of clothing, equipment and club fees can exclude families.</li> <li>• There's a need for better partnerships between clubs, schools and local community groups to offer low-cost options.</li> <li>• Messaging should focus on fun, health and wellbeing rather than competition.</li> </ul> <p><b>In summary:</b></p> <p>There is clear evidence that participation levels change across the life course, with steep declines during adolescence and into adulthood. Different age groups face distinct barriers, from the cost of after-school sport for children, to transport and health concerns for older adults. The consultation highlighted strong support for improving PE in schools, providing affordable community sport for all ages, and ensuring that messaging, facilities and programmes are truly inclusive.</p>
Marital status	<p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>The 2022/23 Continuous Household Survey (CHS) gathered data on participation in sport. Findings related to marital status are available in the published tables: <a href="#">engagement-culture-arts-heritage-sport-by-adults-in-northern-ireland-202223.xlsx (live.com)</a>.</p> <p>Participation levels by marital status were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married / Cohabiting: 50%</li> <li>• Single: 52%</li> <li>• Widowed: 21%</li> <li>• Separated / Divorced: 36%</li> </ul> <p>More recent data from the 2023/24 Continuous Household Survey (CHS) indicates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51% of married people had participated in sport within the previous 7 days.</li> <li>• 54% of single people had participated in sport within the previous 7 days.</li> </ul> <p><b>Needs, Experiences and Priorities</b></p> <p>The Department for Communities' screening assessment on the Active Living Strategy highlights several factors affecting participation across different marital status groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to facilities at times that fit around family and work commitments.</li> <li>• Encouraging parental involvement in children's sports and physical activity.</li> <li>• Childcare issues are a significant barrier for many parents,</li> </ul>

	<p>particularly those in dual-working households.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost is a limiting factor, particularly for those on lower incomes.</li> </ul>
Sexual orientation	<p>here remains a lack of robust data on the sexual orientation of those participating in sport in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>However, the Sport NI Corporate Plan consultation highlighted important insights:</p> <p>“There is an invisibility of narrative around trans inclusion and sexuality, a lack of athletes comfortable to come out, and cultural normalisation of homophobic microaggressions and both reported and unreported hate crime. These factors present serious barriers to accessibility within the sporting system. Single-identity teams exist, but they often struggle to sustain themselves.”</p> <p><b>Key Research and Evidence Sources</b></p> <p>In preparing the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for the Corporate Plan, Sport NI reviewed academic and other relevant sources on LGBTQIA+ experiences in sport, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (2016) <i>OUTstanding in your field: Exploring the needs of LGB&amp;T people in rural Northern Ireland</i>, Rainbow Project.</li> <li>• (2015) <i>Through Our Eyes: Housing and homelessness experiences of LGBT people in Northern Ireland</i>, Rainbow Project &amp; Council for the Homeless NI.</li> <li>• (2013) <i>Through Our Minds: Emotional health and wellbeing of LGBT people in Northern Ireland</i>, Malachai O'Hara.</li> <li>• (2012) <i>Multiple Identity; Multiple Exclusions and Human Rights</i>, Disability Action &amp; Rainbow Project.</li> <li>• (2012) <i>All Partied Out: Substance use in Northern Ireland's LGBT community</i>, Eoin Rooney.</li> <li>• (2011) <i>Making this Home my Home: Inclusive nursing/residential care for older LGBT people</i>, AgeNI &amp; Rainbow Project.</li> <li>• (2011) <i>Left Out Of The Equation: Experiences of LGB young people at school</i>, Gavin Boyd.</li> <li>• (2011) <i>Through Our Eyes: Experiences of LGB people in the workplace</i>, Matthew McDermott.</li> <li>• (2009) <i>Through Our Eyes: Perceptions and experiences of LGB people towards homophobic hate crime and policing</i>, John O'Doherty.</li> </ul> <p><b>Needs, Experiences and Priorities</b></p> <p>Findings from the Department for Communities Active Living Strategy screening assessment (through pre-consultation focus groups) further illustrate the barriers faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in sport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need for exclusive access sessions for LGBTQ+ participants and appropriate changing facilities.</li> <li>• A lack of understanding and awareness of LGBTQ+ needs within the sport sector.</li> <li>• LGBTQ+ participants often feel they need to belong to be motivated to join groups — many feel isolated because of their sexual orientation.</li> <li>• Fears of judgement at facilities such as gyms.</li> <li>• Transphobic abuse experienced during outdoor exercise, with some feeling safer walking in different areas.</li> <li>• Transgender inclusion is a cross-sport issue, requiring sector-wide consideration.</li> <li>• Separate sessions with dedicated changing facilities for trans</li> </ul>

	<p>participants were requested.</p> <p><b>Findings from Sport NI Corporate Plan Consultation</b></p> <p>The public consultation on Sport NI's Corporate Plan 2021-2026 reinforced these insights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marginalised and under-represented groups consistently emphasised the need for an open, welcoming, inclusive sporting culture, one that promotes wellbeing.</li> <li>• Many felt this welcoming culture does not currently exist across the sporting landscape.</li> <li>• Specific solutions proposed by focus groups (including the Celebrating Diversity Panel, Young Persons Panel, and Women's Panel) will be integrated into future plans.</li> </ul> <p><b>Developing the Sporting System</b></p> <p>Innovative ideas emerged through creative discussions with culturally diverse groups, including the concept of a translated app. This app would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow users to select their preferred language, sport, and confidence level.</li> <li>• Signpost users to inclusive clubs.</li> <li>• Feature welcome videos from relatable participants to break down perceptions of exclusivity and competitiveness.</li> </ul> <p>Organisations such as Stonewall, Rainbow Project, and Sporting Mermaids supported the idea of clubs actively indicating their LGBTQ+ inclusivity via this app.</p> <p>The invisibility of trans and LGBTQ+ narratives within sport, coupled with a lack of visible role models, creates systemic barriers. Sport NI is now working with Stonewall, the Rainbow Project, and Sporting Mermaids through their Ambassadors Programme, building training and education tools for the sector, as well as storytelling campaigns to increase empathy and awareness.</p> <p><b>People Development</b></p> <p>LGBTQ+ groups (along with others) reported a significant lack of signposting to development opportunities — reinforcing Northern Ireland's perceived 'who you know' culture. Outreach via non-traditional channels was suggested to better engage underrepresented communities.</p> <p><b>Connected Communities</b></p> <p>Focus groups raised further concerns, particularly around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racist and homophobic aggressions in sport — both blatant and subtle microaggressions.</li> <li>• Outing of young people/athletes transitioning.</li> <li>• Wheelchair athletes being deemed health and safety risks in some school settings.</li> </ul> <p>These experiences reinforce the need for proactive, ongoing work to foster an inclusive and welcoming sporting environment.</p>
Men and women generally	<p><b>Participation Data (2022/23 and 2023/24)</b></p> <p>The 2022/23 <b>Continuous Household Survey (CHS)</b> examined participation in sport by gender. Findings are available in the report: <a href="#">Engagement in Culture, Arts, Heritage &amp; Sport by Adults in Northern Ireland 2022/23</a>.</p> <p>Key findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 55% of males participated in sport at least once in the previous year compared to 40% of females (2022/23).</li> </ul>

- Males participated in a wider range of sports, while females were more likely to participate in activities such as keep-fit, aerobics, dance exercise, yoga, and weight training (26% of females compared to 22% of males).

The **2023/24 Continuous Household Survey** indicated similar patterns:

- In the past 7 days, 55% of males participated in sport compared to 42% of females.
- Full findings available here: [Experience of Sport by Adults in Northern Ireland 2023/24](#).

### **Women's Participation – Sport NI Insights**

Sport NI's **2019 Club Survey** highlighted ongoing gender disparities in club membership:

- 65% male, 35% female membership split.
- Female representation was particularly low among ages 19-49, with 71% male and only 29% female.
- Among club coaches, 69% were male and 31% female. This disparity worsened with age, as women aged 31-49 accounted for just 11% of all coaches.

Sport NI's **Women and Girls in Sport** desk based review of research (November 2022) identified these key challenges for females:

- Lower participation rates, declining further with age, social class, and disability.
- Preference for recreational activities over competitive sport.
- Reduced visits to outdoor spaces (2020/21).
- Under-representation in club participation, coaching, performance, and leadership roles.
- Declining enjoyment and participation at post-primary school level.

### **Sporting System – Women's Focus Group Findings**

Women's focus groups identified the need for gender-specific approaches to participation:

- Inactive girls are more influenced by friends and social media; therefore, initial activities must align with their existing social habits.
- Lack of confidence and competence (physical literacy) was a barrier, with issues stemming from both school PE and traditional club environments.
- Women preferred flexible, family-friendly club offerings rather than rigid competitive structures.
- Greater visibility of relatable female role models, particularly on social media, is needed.
- Short-term funded projects were deemed ineffective in driving sustained change.

### **High Performance – Women's Pathway Challenges**

Women's groups also highlighted barriers in the high-performance pathway:

- Lack of female role models in performance and coaching roles.
- Need for empathetic coaching, life skills training, and post-athlete career support.
- Low media coverage of female athletes reduces visibility and aspiration.

### People Development – Addressing the Coaching Gap

There is a clear need to develop coach education to:

- Recognise women's different learning styles.
- Embed empathetic, athlete-centred coaching approaches.
- Improve safeguarding and wellbeing provisions, particularly in female sports.
- Remove barriers to female coaching and volunteering, such as rigid qualification processes and time commitments.

### Department for Communities – Active Living Strategy

The **Department for Communities' screening assessment** of the **Active Living Strategy** identified specific needs for men and women, summarised below.

#### *Common Needs for Both Genders:*

- Safe, affordable, welcoming facilities.
- Wide range of sports and opening hours.
- Clear coaching pathways and opportunities for progression.
- Innovative use of technology to support engagement.

### Gender-Specific Needs and Priorities

#### *Women:*

- Increased visibility of female role models.
- Challenge unconscious bias in clubs to ensure equal opportunities.
- Targeted recruitment and training of female coaches.
- Address transport barriers and rural access issues.
- Improved promotion and advertising of available opportunities.
- Build confidence and self-esteem, especially in gym and changing environments.
- Encourage buddy systems for new participants.
- Address family/work/time commitments.
- Combat societal attitudes towards women in sport.
- Provide women-only swimming/exercise classes.
- Use local, community-based venues rather than large leisure centres.
- Align exercise opportunities with children's activities so parents can participate too.
- Encourage GPs to prescribe physical activity.
- Offer non-competitive, social or fun-based activities.
- Empower women to prioritise their health without guilt.
- Emphasise lifelong participation over competitive success at school level.
- Maximise use of local outdoor spaces and school facilities.
- Expand successful community initiatives such as Couch to 5K and parkrun.
- Develop tailored classes for women with limited mobility.

#### *Men:*

- Recognition that not all men are active and some face significant barriers.
- Stronger link between physical activity and health prevention.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific focus on men transitioning into retirement to avoid isolation.</li> <li>• Address lack of confidence and motivation.</li> <li>• Use sport as a vehicle for tackling social isolation and mental health.</li> <li>• Rebrand sport-based interventions as "activities" to reduce intimidation.</li> <li>• Improve rural facilities (walking paths, lighting).</li> <li>• Address facility availability and access in disadvantaged areas.</li> <li>• Improve access to GP referral schemes at affordable rates.</li> <li>• Encourage greater community use of stadiums and elite sports facilities.</li> <li>• Foster partnerships between Men's Sheds and sports clubs to promote physical activity.</li> <li>• Ensure programmes are long-term rather than short interventions.</li> <li>• Embed mental health support into physical activity initiatives.</li> </ul>
Disability	<p>The 2022/23 Continuous Household Survey (CHS) included questions on participation in sport by adults with disabilities. Findings are presented in the report available at: <a href="#">NISRA Data Visualisation</a>.</p> <p>The report highlighted a significant participation gap between disabled and non-disabled adults. In 2022/23, only 26% of adults with a disability participated in sport over the previous year, compared to 56% of adults without a disability. This pattern was also evident when looking at participation within the previous four weeks — only 21% of disabled adults took part, compared to 48% of non-disabled adults.</p> <p>The 2023/24 CHS (available at: <a href="#">Experience of Sport by Adults in NI</a>) revealed a slight improvement in participation rates among disabled adults, rising to 30%, but this remained significantly lower than the 59% participation rate of non-disabled adults.</p> <p><b>Barriers and Challenges</b></p> <p><b>Disability Sport NI (DSNI)</b> has highlighted the complex range of factors contributing to lower participation rates among disabled people. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lasting negative impact of COVID-19 on participation habits.</li> <li>• Reduced provision of disability-specific sports opportunities by District Councils.</li> <li>• Disruption to Governing Body programmes during the pandemic.</li> <li>• Financial pressures due to the cost-of-living crisis, making it harder for disabled people to afford participation fees and travel costs.</li> </ul> <p>DSNI expressed particular concern about this decline, as it follows a period of steady progress up to 2019/20 when disabled sports participation was at its highest. This progress had been driven by targeted programmes delivered by Sport NI, District Councils, and Governing Bodies across Northern Ireland.</p> <p><b>Research Findings and Insights</b></p> <p>The <b>Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service (2015)</b> examined sports provision for disabled people and found that disabled adults were far less likely to engage in regular physical activity than</p>



their non-disabled peers (19% compared to 37%).

**Disability Sport NI** estimates that approximately 20% of Northern Ireland's population — around 360,000 people — live with a long-term limiting illness, which is the current working definition of 'disability'.

### Consultation Feedback and Recommendations

Consultation on **Sport NI's 2021-2026 Corporate Plan: The Power of Sport**, and the Department for Communities' screening assessment on the **Active Living Strategy**, identified several critical themes from the disability sector:

- Marginalised and under-represented groups, including disabled people, stressed the need for an open, welcoming, inclusive sporting culture, which promotes both wellness and wellbeing.
- Participants reported that many sports environments still feel unwelcoming and inaccessible.
- There was evidence of **underreporting** of disability, meaning some disabled people's needs may go unrecognised in sport participation data.
- A **targeted focus on inactive people** (rather than just those identifying as disabled) was seen as a more effective engagement strategy.
- Inconsistent accessibility support across Councils was noted, with accessibility provisions appearing to decline in recent years as capital asset management became a higher priority.
- There were calls for a more **diverse leadership** within sports organisations, noting that cognitive bias at Board and committee level can perpetuate exclusion.
- Limited **data quality and granularity** on disability participation makes it harder to design effective policies and programmes.
- The importance of **advocacy, awareness raising, storytelling, training, and the integration of inclusivity requirements into funding criteria** was strongly emphasised.

### Specific Needs and Barriers

The **Department for Communities screening assessment** on the **Active Living Strategy** further highlighted several specific needs and barriers for disabled people:

- Tailored approaches for different types of disability — physical, mental health, sensory, and learning disabilities.
- **Transport and accessibility barriers**, especially in rural areas.
- **Financial barriers**, including the cost of public transport and sports services — with community-based options seen as more accessible.
- Lack of awareness and **poor promotion** of available services and opportunities.
- **Low confidence, motivation and self-esteem**, along with fears of being judged, create psychological barriers to participation.
- The importance of **peer support** — disabled people were more likely to engage if attending with someone they know.
- The need for **advocates or support workers** to help individuals build motivation and confidence to take part.

Dependants	<p>The 2022/23 Continuous Household Survey (CHS) also gathered data on sporting participation levels among adults with dependants. Findings are available in the associated data tables: <a href="#">Engagement in Culture, Arts, Heritage &amp; Sport by Adults in NI 2022/23</a>.</p> <p>In 2022/23, participation rates were slightly higher among adults with dependants (50%) compared to adults without dependants (46%). In 2023/24, this gap widened slightly, with 54% of adults with dependants participating in sport, compared to 49% of those without dependants. This indicates that having dependants is not necessarily a barrier to participation in sport, and may in some cases act as a motivator, potentially linked to family-based or child-led activity programmes. However, further exploration is needed to understand the nature of these activities and whether they provide meaningful opportunities for sustained engagement.</p>
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## 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 given on pages 66-68 of this Guide.

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? minor/major/none		
Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Religious belief	Improved equality of opportunity. Will not impact adversely on this category.	None
Political opinion	Improved equality of opportunity. Will not impact adversely on this category.	None
Racial group	Improved equality of opportunity. Will not impact adversely on this category.	None
Age	Improved equality of opportunity. Will not impact adversely on this category.	None
Marital status	Improved equality of opportunity. Will not impact adversely on this category.	None
Sexual orientation	Improved equality of opportunity. Will not impact adversely on this category.	None
Men and women generally	Improved equality of opportunity. Will not impact adversely on this category.	None
Disability	Improved equality of opportunity. Will not impact adversely on this category.	None
Dependants	Improved equality of opportunity. Will not impact adversely on this category.	None

2 Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?		
Section 75 category	If <b>Yes</b> , provide details	If <b>No</b> , provide reasons
Religious belief	Yes addressed in the corporate plan and EQIA, and through each policy, budget, programme and project, plan screening, and EQIA if required.	

Political opinion	As above	
Racial group	As above	
Age	As above	
Marital status	As above	
Sexual orientation	As above	
Men and women generally	As above	
Disability	As above	
Dependants	As above	

<b>3 To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? minor/major/none</b>		
Good relations category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact minor/major/none
Religious belief	The Equality Scheme and action plan is designed to positively impact on good relations and have no adverse impact.	No adverse impact
Political opinion	As above.	
Racial group	As above.	

<b>4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?</b>		
Good relations category	If <b>Yes</b> , provide details	If <b>No</b> , provide reasons
Religious belief	<p>Yes through the actions, equality and good relations has been mainstreamed in line with the corporate plan cornerstones to promote good relations.</p> <p>Our programmes offers clear opportunities to promote equality of opportunity across all religious groups by actively promoting participation in sport and physical activity as a shared space, fostering understanding and encouraging cross-community engagement through sport. This approach reflects Sport NI's commitment to supporting inclusive sporting opportunities for everyone, regardless of religious belief or background.</p> <p>Sport and physical activity have long been recognised as valuable vehicles for promoting good relations and fostering mutual understanding between communities in Northern Ireland, particularly in areas where religious and community divisions remain pronounced. Our programmes support the</p>	

	<p>delivery of sporting programmes that are deliberately designed to be welcoming, inclusive and reflective of all communities. Our programmes deliver a broad and balanced portfolio of sporting opportunities, ensuring that the programme includes sports and activities that are traditionally popular across all religious communities (e.g., Football, Athletics, Golf, Basketball, and Gaelic Games), as well as providing opportunities to experience new or less familiar sports in neutral or shared spaces. The programmes seek to bring participants from different religious backgrounds together, building relationships and breaking down barriers through sport, consistent with Sport NI's commitment to inclusive participation and the aims of the Active Living Strategy. We encourage governing bodies and delivery partners to embed good relations and religious inclusivity into programme design and delivery, ensuring facilities, sessions, competitions and events are welcoming to all and explicitly avoid the risk of reinforcing division. This inclusive and cross-community approach is critical to building a positive and welcoming sporting culture, aligned to the investment's cornerstone commitments to inclusion, well-being, and community focus. It also recognises the valuable role sport can play in peacebuilding and community cohesion in Northern Ireland.</p>	
Political opinion	<p>Our programmes actively promote equality of opportunity across all political opinions by ensuring that sport and physical activity programmes are delivered in ways that are inclusive, welcoming and free from political bias, providing safe and accessible environments for all participants regardless of their political outlook. Sport and physical activity, particularly in the context of Northern Ireland, have significant potential to foster understanding, reconciliation, and shared experiences between people of different political backgrounds, especially in communities where political division has historically acted as a barrier to participation. Our programmes focus on building a positive and inclusive sports culture ensures that funded projects will:</p> <p>Deliver a diverse portfolio of sporting opportunities that reflect and attract participants from all political backgrounds. This will include sports with cross-community appeal (e.g., Football, Athletics, Golf, Basketball) as well as sports that might traditionally have stronger associations with specific community or political identities, with a focus on creating shared and welcoming spaces for all.</p> <p>Support programming that proactively encourages cross-community participation, particularly in areas with historically low levels of cross-political engagement, fostering opportunities for people from different political traditions to come together through sport.</p> <p>Encourage representation from diverse political backgrounds within sporting governance, leadership, coaching and volunteering structures, ensuring that decision-making and</p>	

	<p>programme design reflects the full breadth of political diversity within Northern Ireland.</p> <p>This approach aligns directly with the wider strategic focus on inclusion, equality and removing barriers to participation within the Active Living Strategy and Sport NI's Corporate Plan 2021-2026, recognising that sport can and should act as a neutral and unifying space, irrespective of political identity.</p>	
Racial group	<p>Our programmes are committed to promoting equality of opportunity for people diverse community backgrounds, ensuring that the sporting system in Northern Ireland is welcoming, accessible, and reflective of our increasingly diverse population. We work with delivery partners to design and deliver programmes that actively encourage participation from culturally diverse groups, recognising that ethnic minorities remain under-represented in organised sport across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Specific actions to promote equality of opportunity include:</p> <p>Delivering culturally competent programming, ensuring that sport and physical activity offers are culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs and traditions of different ethnic groups, for example considering modesty requirements, cultural preferences, and religious observances in scheduling, attire, and facilities.</p> <p>Tackling language and communication barriers by encouraging the use of multi-lingual materials where appropriate and partnering with community and cultural organisations who have trusted relationships with diverse racial groups.</p> <p>Actively promoting opportunities through diverse channels, ensuring that promotional campaigns reach ethnic minority communities, particularly those who may have less awareness of existing sport and physical activity offers.</p> <p>Targeted outreach and engagement, particularly in areas with higher proportions of ethnic minority populations, including new communities, asylum seekers, and refugees.</p> <p>This proactive approach supports the wider ambitions set out in Sport NI's Corporate Plan 2021-2026 and aligns with the Department for Communities' Active Living Strategy, both of which emphasise the need to break down barriers and tackle inequalities in sport. It also acknowledges findings from previous consultations, where under-represented groups reported a lack of targeted outreach, low visibility of opportunities, and barriers linked to cultural awareness and inclusion.</p>	

## **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).***

The action plan contains programmes that recognise that many individuals belong to more than one Section 75 category, such as ethnic minority women, young disabled people, or LGBTQIA+ individuals from rural areas. They aims to positively impact all individual Section 75 categories, but also recognises the complex intersectionality of identities and the unique challenges this can create in accessing sport and physical activity.

By embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at every stage, from programme screening, design through to delivery and evaluation, the investment ensures that people with multiple identities will benefit from opportunities tailored to their needs. This includes ensuring that coaching, facilities, equipment, and programming are inclusive and culturally competent, and that understanding intersectionality becomes a core part of workforce development and governance standards.

The goal is to create sport opportunities that are open, welcoming and accessible to all, while nurturing performance pathways where talent is identified and supported based solely on potential and ability, not background or identity.

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

Corporate plan consultation and desk-based review of research to inform the corporate plan EQIA and specific research on women in sport examined the intersectionality of multiple identifies and the associated barriers and impact. This particularly was evident when analysing research and focus groups with women from culturally diverse background, with disabilities, single parents, from areas of deprivation, and older women where multiple barriers apply to their ability and perception of sport and their route to transition from inactivity to activity referenced in this screening form.

CSPAA and Kids Life and Times and Young People Life and Times and Children's Report Card further breaks down analysis into other S75 categories to understand disparities in participation for children with multiple identifies.

The Race and racial inequality research also sought a greater understanding of lived experience through age, gender and disability.



### Part 3. Screening decision

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

*Sport NI has determined from an analysis of evidence used to inform the Equality Scheme and developed action plans that have mainstreamed equality that an adverse impact is not likely and therefore an EQIA is not required. The corporate plan, for reasons of strategic significance was subjected to an EQIA and the Equality Scheme aligns to support its delivery- and intent to mainstream equality and good relations.*

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.

No adverse impact determined.

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 no adverse impact determined.***

## 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?

**No**

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.

## Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

<b>Screened by:</b>	<b>Position/Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
A Campbell	Policy and Insights Manager	21 05 25
<b>Approved by:</b>		
N Algie	Head of Policy & Corporate Services	22.05.25

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.