

DoF Screening template

Screening is the first of two methods by which the necessary level of “regard” is demonstrated as being paid to the statutory equality goal, as set out in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The DoF Equality Scheme commits us to screening our policies. This includes our strategies and plans, policies, legislative developments; and new ways of working such as – the introduction, change or end of an existing service, procedure, policy etc.

This screening template is designed to help business areas consider the likely equality and human rights impacts of their proposed decisions on different groups of customers, service users, staff and visitors.

Detailed information about the Section 75 equality duties and what they mean in practice is available on the Equality Commission’s website:
<http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/S75GuideforPublicAuthoritiesApril2010.pdf>

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 accessible on the DoF website as soon as possible following completion and made available in alternative formats on request.

All Section 75 consultees should be advised of the screening exercise once the final policy decision has been taken.

The screening template has 4 sections to complete. These are:

Section A - details about the policy / decision that is being screened.

Section B - 4 key questions that require you to outline the likely impacts on equality groups, and all supporting evidence.

Section C - 4 key questions in relation to obligations under the Disability Discrimination Order and the Human Rights Act.

Section D - the formal record of the screening decision.

SECTION A

Information about the policy

This 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 on a step-by-step basis.

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

Is this a new or revised policy?

New / ~~Revised~~ (delete as appropriate)

a) Name of the policy

Commencement of provisions contained within the **Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Act (Northern Ireland) 2026**, and making of related Regulations, concerning:

- a) Amendment of processes for registration of a birth or still-birth by same-sex female couples who are not married to or in a civil partnership with each other, (provided for by the Schedule to the Act); and
- b) Permanent establishment of temporary death and still-birth remote registration procedures in operation as a result of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and subsequent Orders.

b) Brief Description of the policy

The Act brings processes for registration of a birth or still-birth by a same-sex couple, who are not married to or in a civil partnership with each other, into line with those already in place for other couples (including opposite-sex couples).

The Act, along with Regulations made to prescribe the means of signature for Medical Certificates of Cause of Death and Certificates of Still-Birth by medical practitioners, places temporary measures arising from the Coronavirus Act 2020 (and subsequent Orders) relating to remote registration of deaths and still-births and the electronic transfer of documents by/to Medical Practitioners, Registrars and Funeral Directors on to a permanent footing.

c) Aims of the policy/ Rationale behind the changes

The Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Act (Northern Ireland) 2026, and related Regulations, aims to –

- 1) remove an anomaly from the Births registration process that had previously resulted in a distinct group (unmarried/not in civil partnership same-sex female couples) being treated differently from other groups;
- 2) remove an anomaly from the Still-births registration process that had previously resulted in a distinct group (unmarried/not in civil partnership same-sex female couples) being treated differently from other groups;
and
- 3) place onto permanent statute the process of remote registration of deaths/still-births.

d) Who will the policy affect?

Same-sex female couples who are unmarried/not in civil partnership and who would ordinarily be able to register the birth of a child and in doing so record both as parents to the child, (as per the introduction of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008), will now be able to elect to attend separately to register the birth.

Same-sex female couples who are unmarried/not in a civil partnership and where the still-birth would ordinarily be registered jointly by the couples or by the mother only - the second female parent will now be able to register the still-birth without the mother being present. This change will not prevent the mother from requesting re-registration of the still-birth where she disputes any of the information provided by the second female parent.

Provisions concerning remote registration of deaths and still-births and the electronic transfer of documents by/to stakeholders such as Medical Practitioners and Funeral Directors will not have an effect on either of those groups, as these processes have been in place since enactment of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and no changes to them are being brought forward.

e) Is this a NICS wide policy?

Yes.

f) Who will implement the policy?

Department of Finance, General Register Office for Northern Ireland

g) Will this policy or revision address an existing inequality? **Yes/No**
If yes, please give details.

Existing processes for registration of the birth of a child allow that opposite-sex couples (whether married/in a civil partnership or not) and same-sex female couples who are married/in a civil partnership may, if they choose, elect to register the birth details separately, with both parents' details included on the resulting birth certificate. Same-sex female couples who are unmarried/not in civil partnership, and where conditions laid out in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 are met, did not have the option to attend for registration of birth separately. Similarly, in order to register a still-birth, current processes for registration of a still-birth require that the mother and the second female parent must attend together in order to have the second parent's details recorded on the registration. This legislation addresses those discrepancies, allowing the second female parent to attend separately from the mother, to provide details for a birth or a still-birth.

h) Will this policy or revision benefit any Section 75 categories? **Yes/No**
If yes, please give details.

As a Multiple Identity comprising the following Section 75 categories - Sexual Orientation; Gender; Marital Status:
Provisions in the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Act (Northern Ireland) 2026 concerning the birth and still-birth registration processes for a child of

- a same-sex female couple, and
- who are not married to (or in a civil partnership) with each other, and
- for whom conditions laid out in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 have been met;

will provide that such a couple can –

- 1) register a birth separately if they choose to do so, in the same manner as is the case for other couples of other sexual orientation and/or marital status (including civil partnership status); and
 - 2) register a still-birth separately if they choose to do so, in the same manner as is the case for other couples of other sexual orientation and/or marital status (including civil partnership status).
- i) Will this policy or revision have an adverse differential impact upon any of the Section 75 groupings? ~~Yes~~**No**. If yes, please give details.

Section B

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? Set out all evidence below along with details of the different Section 75 groups you have met and / or consulted with to help inform your screening assessment. Please also

provide details of priorities and needs identified for each Section 75 group.

- **Religious belief**

No evidence/information gathered as the policy does not impact differently on people/groups of differing Religious Belief.

- **Political opinion**

No evidence/information gathered as the policy does not impact differently on people/groups of differing Political Opinion.

- **Racial group**

No evidence/information gathered as the policy does not impact differently on people/groups of differing Racial group.

- **Age**

No evidence/information gathered as the policy does not impact differently on people/groups of differing Age.

- **Marital status**

No evidence/information gathered as the policy seeks to redress an inequality affecting same-sex female couples who are unmarried/not in civil partnership. Such redress does not remove any existing process available to them; i.e., if they choose to do so, they can attend registration of the birth together in person and can register a still-birth jointly or by the mother only.

- **Sexual orientation**

No evidence/information gathered as the policy seeks to redress an inequality affecting same-sex female couples who are unmarried/not in civil partnership. Such redress does not remove any existing process available to them; i.e., if they choose to do so, they can attend registration of the birth together in person.

- **Men & women generally**

No evidence/information gathered as the policy seeks to redress an inequality affecting same-sex female couples who are unmarried/not in civil partnership. Such redress does not remove any existing process available to them; i.e., if they choose to do so, they can attend registration of a birth or still-birth together in person.

- **Disability**

No evidence/information gathered as the policy does not impact differently on people/groups of differing Disability status.

- **Dependents**

No evidence/information gathered as the policy does not impact differently on people/groups of differing status vis-à-vis Dependents.

If you have no evidence held, outline how you will obtain it:

No plans to acquire evidence, as it is determined that, for the affected section 75 categories as they combine as a multiple identity (see *Additional Considerations – Multiple Identity* section below), the changes being implemented will bring redress to an existing inequality without removing any existing rights/processes; for the remaining section 75 categories, the policy does not materially affect those different groupings positively or negatively in respect of others.

Screening questions

There are 4 essential screening questions:

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the nine Section 75 categories? (minor/major/none)
2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories? (yes/no)
3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact upon good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none)
4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between these three groups? (Yes/No)

Are there likely impacts on Section 75 Categories?

- **Religious belief:**

Adherence to any particular Religious belief does not impact on the outcomes from this policy, nor do the aims and operation of this policy positively or adversely impact on any people/groups of differing Religious Belief.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor~~ / ~~Major~~ / **None** (delete as appropriate)

- **Political opinion:**

Subscription to any particular Political opinion does not impact on the outcomes from this policy, nor do the aims and operation of this policy positively or adversely impact on any people/groups of differing Political opinion.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor~~ / ~~Major~~ / **None** (delete as appropriate)

- **Racial group:**

Membership of any particular Racial group does not impact on the outcomes from this policy, nor do the aims and operation of this policy positively or adversely impact on any people/groups of differing Racial group.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor~~ / ~~Major~~ / **None** (delete as appropriate)

- **Age:**

Membership of any particular Age group does not impact on the outcomes from this policy, nor do the aims and operation of this policy positively or adversely impact on any people/groups of differing Age group.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor~~ / ~~Major~~ / **None** (delete as appropriate)

- **Marital status:**

Marital status is an element of the multiple identity (see *Additional Considerations – Multiple Identity* section below) affected by the newly introduced processes for registration of a birth by a same-sex female couple who are unmarried/not in civil partnership (and for whom conditions laid out in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 have been met). The changes being introduced will positively impact the group identified.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor~~ / **Major** / ~~None~~ (delete as appropriate)

- **Sexual orientation:**

Sexual orientation is an element of the multiple identity (see *Additional Considerations – Multiple Identity* section below) affected by the newly introduced processes for registration of a birth by a same-sex female couple who are unmarried/not in civil partnership (and for whom conditions laid out in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 have been met). The changes being introduced will positively impact the group identified.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor~~ / **Major** / ~~None~~ (delete as appropriate)

- **Men and women generally:**

Gender is an element of the multiple identity (see *Additional Considerations – Multiple Identity* section below) affected by the newly introduced processes for registration of a birth by a same-sex female couple who are unmarried/not in civil partnership (and for whom conditions laid out in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 have been met). The changes being introduced will positively impact the group identified.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor~~ / **Major** / ~~None~~ (delete as appropriate)

- **Disability:**

The Disability status of applicants does not impact on the outcomes from this policy, nor do the aims and operation of this policy positively or adversely impact on any people/groups of differing Disability status.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor~~ / ~~Major~~ / **None** (delete as appropriate)

- **Dependants:**

The status of applicants with regard to Dependents does not impact on the outcomes from this policy, nor do the aims and operation of this policy positively or adversely impact on any people/groups of differing status in this regard.

What is the level of impact? ~~Minor~~ / ~~Major~~ / **None** (delete as appropriate)

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).

Impacts of the changes being introduced have been identified for people of multiple identities/Section 75 categories.

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

The changes to the birth registration process being introduced will positively impact on same-sex female couples, who are unmarried/not in civil partnership and for whom conditions laid out in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 have been met. The section 75 categories concerned are:

- Sexual Orientation;
- Marital Status (including Civil Partnership status); and
- Gender.

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.

Alternatively there may already be policies in place which would mitigate any adverse impact identified.

Mitigation measures proposed:

No mitigation measures are proposed as the changes being introduced will positively impact the affected group and will not negatively impact on all other groups.

Section C

DoF also has legislative obligations to meet under the [Disability Discrimination Order](#) and the [Human Rights Act](#) . The following questions relate to these two areas.

Consideration of Disability Duties

Does the proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity for DoF to better **promote positive attitudes** towards disabled people? **No.**

Explain your assessment in full

The policy does not impact either positively or negatively on people/groups of different disability status. As such, the policy does not provide an opportunity to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.

Does the proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity to actively **increase the participation** by disabled people in public life? **No.**

Explain your assessment in full

The policy does not impact either positively or negatively on people/groups of different disability status. As such, the policy does not increase the participation by disabled people in public life.

Consideration of Human Rights

The Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998 brings the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law and it applies in N Ireland. Articles 3 and 4 are classified as “absolute” rights ie the State can never withhold or take away these rights. All others are either “qualified” or “limited”. Further information is available via the following link

<http://www.nicshumanrightsguide.com/>

Indicate any potential adverse impacts that the policy / decision may have in relation to human rights issues.

	<u>Adverse Impact</u>	
	(delete as appropriate)	
Right to Life	Article 2	No
Prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment	Article 3	No
Prohibition of slavery and forced labour	Article 4	No
Right to liberty and security	Article 5	No
Right to a fair and public trial	Article 6	No
Right to no punishment without law	Article 7	No
Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence	Article 8	No
Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Article 9	No
Right to freedom of expression	Article 10	No
Right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association	Article 11	No

Right to marry and to found a family	Article 12	No
The prohibition of discrimination	Article 14	No
Protection of property and enjoyment of possessions	Protocol 1 Article 1	No
Right to education	Protocol 1 Article 2	No
Right to free and secret elections	Protocol 1 Article 3	No

Please indicate any ways which you consider the policy positively promotes human rights.

The changes being introduced provide redress for an inequality affecting same-sex female couples who are not married/in civil partnership, with particular reference to HRA Articles 8 & 12.

Please explain any adverse impacts on human rights that you have identified.

No adverse impacts have been identified.

If you have identified any adverse impacts on human rights through this screening you must complete a Human Rights Impact Assessment:
<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/human-rights-impact-assessment-proforma>.

Monitoring Arrangements

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's [Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities \(July 2007\)](http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/S75MonitoringGuidance2007.pdf):
<http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/S75MonitoringGuidance2007.pdf>

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.

Please detail proposed monitoring arrangements below:

No monitoring arrangements are proposed; the changes being implemented afford the affected Multiple Identity group with the same rights and options as are available to other groups.

Section D - Formal Record of Screening Decision

Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being screened:

Commencement of provisions contained within the **Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Act (Northern Ireland) 2026**, and making of related Regulations, concerning:

- a) Amendment of processes for registration of a birth by same-sex female couples who are not married to or in a civil partnership with each other, (provided for by the Schedule to the Act); and
- b) Permanent establishment of temporary remote death and still-births registration procedures in operation as a result of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and subsequent Orders.

I can confirm that the proposed policy / decision has been screened for (i) equality of opportunity, (ii) good relations disabilities duties and (iii) human rights issues

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy / decision is –

(delete as appropriate)

* **Screened Out** – No EQIA necessary (no impacts)

Provide a brief note to explain how this decision was reached:

A Multiple Identity (three section 75 categories in combination) group is affected by the changes being introduced, albeit positively so. As no negative impacts have been identified, a full EQIA is not required.

Screening assessment completed by -

Name	Jonathan McCann
Grade	Staff Officer
Date	29 th January 2026

And approved by –

Name Violet Kennedy
Grade 7
Date 19 February 2026

Central Support Team Notified (insert date)

Equality Contacts advised (insert date)

Screening uploaded to DoF website (insert date)