

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

a) Name of the policy

Recruitment and Retention Allowance (RRA) for Grade 6 Head of Forestry, DAERA.

b) Brief Description of the policy

Proposal to introduce a time-limited, non-pensionable Recruitment and Retention Allowance (RRA) for the vacant Grade 6 Head of Forestry role.

c) Aims of the policy/ Rationale behind the changes

The allowance aims to address demonstrable recruitment difficulties evidenced in the business case. The allowance will be paid monthly, pro-rated, with clear role-based eligibility and a formal review within three years in line with NICS HR Handbook Chapter 8.32.

d) Who will the policy affect?

Directly affected will be the new postholder once recruited. Indirectly affected are other Grade 6 analogous roles for internal pay comparisons.

e) Is this a NICS wide policy?

The RRA policy is NICS wide; this particular allowance will apply to a single postholder once recruited.

f) Who will implement the policy?

DAERA Forest Service and NICSHR/HRConnect; policy oversight by People & Organisational Development (People & OD), Department of Finance.

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

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

- i) Will this policy or revision have an adverse differential impact upon any of the Section 75 groupings? No. If yes, please give details.

As the section 75 characteristics of the potential postholder are unknown at this time, it is unknown whether there will be an adverse differential impact on any section 75 groupings. However, any impact will be mitigated by the material factor defence of failure to recruit a Grade 6 Head of Forestry.

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.

Screening is based on information available here: [Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service - 2026 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

Section 75 category	Cohort	Key figures
Men and women generally	Grade 6	Male: 41.9% Female: 58.1%
Age	Grade 6/7	25–34: 1.8% 35–44: 23.8% 45–54: 42.8% 55–64: 29.2% 65+: 2.4%
Religious belief / community background	Grade 6	Catholic: 60.2% Protestant: 36.2% Not determined: 3.6%
Disability	Grade 6/7	Declared disability: 4.3%

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

The data supplied is extracted from reports provided by the NI Statistics & Research Agency and based on staff data held on the HR system. Staff have been reminded to update their disability, sexual orientation and dependent status data.

Whilst there was no specific consultation with Section 75 groups, there is consultation with unions.

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)

Minor

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories? (yes/no)

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)

No direct interactions with the public are affected. No differential impacts are anticipated on good relations among persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group in the workplace context; standard dignity at work policies apply.

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between these three groups? (Yes/No)

No direct interactions with the public are affected. No differential impacts are anticipated on good relations among persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group in the workplace context; standard dignity at work policies apply.

Are there likely impacts on Section 75 Categories?

Religious belief: NICS does not hold employee data by religious belief; but does hold information on community background. This is a role-specific allowance that will be applied to the new postholder; there is no differential mechanism linked to religious belief or community background. Likely impact: none. Eligibility is role-based.

Political opinion: NICS does not gather data on political opinion of its staff. No impacts envisaged.

Racial group: No evidence as to racial composition of Grade 6 cohort. No impacts envisaged.

Age: Likely impact: none to minor. The measure serves a legitimate aim (addressing market scarcity) and is proportionate as time-limited and reviewed.

Marital status: For 2026, data on marital status is missing for 6.8% of NICS staff. For those staff with whom data is available 38.9% are recorded as single and 53.9% as married. Likely impact: none. No link between marital status and eligibility.

Sexual orientation: Information on sexual orientation is missing for 58.7% of NICS staff. Of those staff for whom data are available 4.0% described their orientation as towards someone of the same sex, 3.2% towards both sexes and 92.8% towards someone of a different sex. Since coverage is limited to a relatively small proportion of staff, staff with a recorded sexual orientation may not be representative of the whole NICS and so it would not be appropriate to use these figures as an estimate of the NICS profile. Likely impact: none. No link between sexual orientation and eligibility.

Men and women generally: Likely impact: none to minor. There is a higher proportion of females at Grade 6. However, the proposed allowance is underpinned by a genuine material factor defence, based on market evidence, applied strictly by role, and time-limited with review.

Disability: Likely impact: none to minor. No link between disability and eligibility. Payment rules are pro-rated for part-time and no attendance-related conditions create indirect discrimination.

Dependants: Likely impact: none to minor. Allowance is pro-rated and neutral to working patterns so that staff with caring responsibilities are not disadvantaged.

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).

As eligibility is based on role and labour-market factors rather than personal characteristics, no compounded adverse impact is identified.

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

None available.

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:

Considered alternatives

The business case considered several options. The proposed approach delivers the strongest non-monetary benefits and is the only option that addresses both the limited candidate pool and the reward barrier, while minimising the equality footprint through time-limited allowance and review.

Objective justification and proportionality

Business case evidence demonstrates the legitimate aim (addressing role-specific market scarcity) and the necessity of an allowance as the minimum effective intervention. Mitigations include keeping the allowance non-pensionable, time-limited and reviewed within three years.

Tight eligibility and scope control

Eligibility is strictly by role for an individual postholder.

Working pattern neutrality

Payment is monthly and pro-rated for all part-time and partial-month changes to

avoid indirect discrimination for staff with caring responsibilities or disability-related adjustments.

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?

Explain your assessment in full

Neutral. The allowance is role-based, payment rules are neutral and pro-rated. No attendance-related conditions are proposed. No direct interactions with the public are affected. No opportunity to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people beyond the workplace context; standard dignity at work policies apply.

Does the proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity to actively **increase the participation** by disabled people in public life?

Explain your assessment in full

Neutral. The allowance is role-based, payment rules are neutral and pro-rated. No attendance-related conditions are proposed. No direct interactions with the public are affected. No differential impacts are anticipated on good relations among persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group in the workplace context; standard dignity at work policies apply.

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.

Adverse Impact

(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.

N/A

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

None

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:

NICS requires three-yearly review of RRAs which gives the opportunity to examine evidence (joiners/leavers/destination data where available) that might change the balance of considerations in this screening i.e. evidence that the allowance is not improving recruitment or retention against the trajectory in the business case.

Section D - Formal Record of Screening Decision

Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being screened:

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

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

On the basis of the evidence and mitigations set out above, the proposal is screened out for EQIA at this time, subject to monitoring and a formal review.

The screening identifies no significant adverse equality impacts. Potential indirect impacts are minor, objectively justified by labour-market factors, and capable of mitigation through monitoring and review. The proposal pursues a legitimate aim (addressing role-specific market scarcity) through a proportionate, time-limited allowance with clear eligibility, monthly pro-rated payment and formal review within three years.

Monitoring is in place to validate outcomes and identify any emerging adverse impact.

Screening assessment completed by -

Name Alison Welsh
Grade G7
Date 17/07/26

And approved by –

Name Olivia Martin
Grade G5
Date 17/07/26

Central Support Team Notified

Equality Contacts advised

Screening uploaded to DoF website