

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 certain Procurement Staff: The recruitment and retention allowance will be payable to MCIPS-qualified procurement staff at grades SO-G7 who are substantively deployed within designated Centres of Procurement Expertise, and whose posts have been approved as eligible. The allowance will not apply to staff outside the specified grades, to roles based outside designated Centres of Procurement Expertise, or to posts that have not been approved as eligible by the Head of Procurement Profession.

b) Brief Description of the policy

This policy proposes the introduction of a recruitment and retention allowance for staff employed in designated procurement roles as described above. The allowance is intended to address evidenced recruitment and retention pressures linked to labour-market conditions and skills scarcity in certain procurement roles.

c) Aims of the policy/ Rationale behind the changes

The aim of the policy is to support the NICS's ability to recruit and retain staff with specialist procurement skills in a competitive external labour market, thereby protecting organisational capability and service delivery. The allowance is role-based and reflects market conditions rather than personal characteristics.

d) Who will the policy affect?

See above: The recruitment and retention allowance will be payable to MCIPS-qualified procurement staff at grades SO-G7 who are substantively deployed within designated Centres of Procurement Expertise, and whose posts have been approved as eligible. The allowance will not apply to staff outside the specified grades, to roles based outside designated Centres of Procurement Expertise, or to posts that have not been approved as eligible by the Head of Procurement Profession.

e) Is this a NICS wide policy?

Yes, although it has limited application as described above, in order to recruit and retain staff with MCIPS qualifications.

f) Who will implement the policy?

People and Organisational Development (People & OD), in conjunction with the relevant business areas and payroll, subject to the necessary approvals.

g) Will this policy or revision address an existing inequality?
If yes, please give details.

No. The policy is designed to address labour-market recruitment and retention pressures rather than an identified inequality related to protected characteristics.

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

No specific Section 75 group is targeted. Any benefit arises from eligibility for defined roles rather than personal characteristics.

- 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.

No significant adverse differential impact is identified. Potential indirect impacts are considered below.

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.

This screening is informed by the following evidence sources:

- Procurement workforce equality data from the SIP report (April 2025), covering procurement staff within the Departments of Finance and Infrastructure
- NICS General Service comparator data from the Power BI report on age and gender by grade (March 2025)
- Community background comparator data from NISRA Equality Statistics for the NICS 2025
- Internal analysis of the relevant DoF & DfI procurement workforce by gender, age and community background.

• **Religious belief**

No evidence available as NICS does not hold employee data by religious belief. The policy relates to pay flexibility based on role and labour-market factors.

Community background data was collected for 35 Procurement staff (SO/DP/G7) within scope of the proposed allowance:

- **Protestant:** 11 (31.4%)
- **Catholic:** 24 (68.6%)

NICS-wide benchmarks (grade-specific) indicate a broadly **50/50** Protestant/Catholic split.

Statistical analysis:

- Grade-by-grade analysis (SO, DP, G7) did not show statistically significant differences at the 5% level due to small sample sizes, although SO and DP show a practically large imbalance in favour of Catholics.
- When the Procurement cohort is assessed *as a whole*, the difference is statistically significant, with a stronger Catholic representation than the NICS benchmark.

Assessment for screening purposes: Despite this difference in workforce composition, the RRA is:

- role-based,
- applied consistently to all eligible Procurement staff, and
- objectively justified by recruitment and retention evidence.

There is therefore no evidence of adverse impact on equality of opportunity on the basis of community background.

• **Political opinion**

No evidence available as NICS does not hold employee data by political opinion.

• **Racial group**

No evidence indicates differential impact by racial group. Eligibility is based solely on role.

• **Age**

Age-profile data for relevant DoF and DfI procurement staff (April 2025) shows concentration in the **35–49 and 50–59 age bands**, with limited representation under 25 and no representation over 60. This differs from the wider NICS General Service population, which has a broader age distribution.

This reflects experience and professional requirements associated with procurement roles rather than the design of the proposed allowance. Eligibility is role-based and not age-based.

- **Marital status**

No evidence indicates differential impact by marital status.

- **Sexual orientation**

No evidence indicates differential impact by sexual orientation.

- **Men & women generally**

As at April 2025, the DoF and DfI procurement workforce within scope of this policy is broadly gender-balanced overall, with **52.78% female and 47.22% male** representation across SO, DP and G7 grades. Female representation is higher at SO (64.29%) and DP (57.14%) grades, while male representation is higher at Procurement grades.

This profile is broadly comparable to, and in some grades more balanced than, the wider NICS General Service population. There is no evidence that the proposed allowance would disproportionately benefit or disadvantage one sex over the other.

- **Disability**

There is no evidence to suggest that disability status correlates with eligibility for procurement roles or access to the allowance. The policy does not introduce eligibility criteria that would disadvantage disabled staff.

- **Dependents**

No evidence indicates differential impact by dependants. While staff with dependants may have different financial circumstances, the allowance does not introduce conditions that would disadvantage this group.

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

If implemented, further evidence could be gathered through HR monitoring data, equality returns and periodic review of uptake and impact.

Screening questions

There are four 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)

See below

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:**

No differential impact identified.

Level of impact: None

Community background differences noted but not caused or exacerbated by the policy)

- **Political opinion:**

No differential impact identified.

Level of impact: None

- **Racial group:**

No differential impact identified.

Level of impact: None

- **Age:**

There is a potential indirect association with age due to the experience profile of procurement roles, but this reflects occupational structure rather than policy design.

Level of impact: Minor

- **Marital status:**

No differential impact identified.

Level of impact: None

- **Sexual orientation:**

No differential impact identified.

Level of impact: None

- **Men and women generally:**

Based on April 2025 data for DoF and DfI procurement staff, the gender distribution across grades is broadly balanced and does not indicate structural under-representation of either sex within the cohort affected by the allowance. As eligibility is role-based and applied consistently, no adverse impact is identified.

Level of impact: Minor

- **Disability:**

No inherent barrier or disadvantage identified.

Level of impact: Minor

- **Dependants:**

No differential impact identified.

Level of impact: None

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).

Individuals with multiple identities (for example, older women with caring responsibilities or disabled staff in senior procurement roles) are represented within the DoF and DfI procurement workforce. As eligibility is based on role and labour-market factors rather than personal characteristics, no compounded adverse impact is identified.

Any future extension of the allowance would require refreshed equality analysis.

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

Analysis of the available equality data for procurement staff within the Departments of Finance and Infrastructure, as at April 2025, indicates that individuals with multiple identities (for example, women in mid-to-senior grades, older staff with caring responsibilities, or disabled staff within specialist procurement roles) are likely to be represented within the cohort affected by the policy.

The proposed Recruitment and Retention Allowance is based solely on role eligibility and labour-market conditions and does not introduce criteria linked to personal characteristics. As such, no specific adverse impacts on people with multiple identities have been identified at this stage.

Potential indirect impacts associated with age, sex, community background or disability reflect the existing occupational and grade profile of procurement roles rather than the design of the allowance

itself. These impacts are assessed as minor and capable of mitigation through consistent application of eligibility criteria and monitoring.

The analysis is limited to procurement staff within DoF and DfI.

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:

The allowance will be:

- objectively justified by recruitment and retention evidence
- limited to defined roles experiencing labour-market pressures
- applied consistently within scope
- reviewed periodically to ensure continued necessity and proportionality

These measures mitigate the risk of indirect discrimination and support compliance with equal pay obligations.

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 is neutral in this regard. By supporting competitive remuneration for specialist roles, it may indirectly support inclusive recruitment and retention.

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

No direct impact identified, although improved recruitment outcomes may indirectly support workforce diversity.

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.

No adverse impacts are identified in relation to the European Convention on Human Rights. The policy does not interfere with rights relating to non-discrimination, property, private life or employment protections.

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

No adverse impacts identified: the policy supports fair and proportionate remuneration and effective public administration.

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>

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:

If implemented, the policy will be evaluated through:

- uptake by grade and protected characteristic (using available HR data)
- recruitment and retention outcomes in procurement roles
- periodic review of labour-market justification

This will ensure continued compliance with Section 75 and equal pay obligations.

Section D - Formal Record of Screening Decision

Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being screened:

Recruitment and Retention Allowance (RRA) for certain Procurement Staff: The recruitment and retention allowance will be payable to MCIPS-qualified procurement staff at grades SO-G7 who are substantively deployed within designated Centres of Procurement Expertise, and whose posts have been approved as eligible. The allowance will not apply to staff outside the specified grades, to roles based outside designated Centres of Procurement Expertise, or to posts that have not been approved as eligible by the Head of Procurement Profession.

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 impacts)

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

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 conclusion is based on DoF and DfI procurement workforce data as at April 2025 and does not pre-judge impacts for procurement staff employed elsewhere in the NICS.

Screening assessment completed by -

Name Alison Welsh
Grade G7
Date 20/03/2026

And approved by –

Name Olivia Martin
Grade G5
Date 22/3/2026

Central Support Team Notified

Equality Contacts advised

Screening uploaded to DoF website