



Department of  
**Justice**

An Roinn Dí agus Cirt  

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Mánnystrie o tha Laa

**DOJ Section 75**

# EQUALITY SCREENING FORM

**Title of Policy:** Consultation on proposed amendments to firearms licensing fees and the “banded system”.

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

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

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

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

## **Introduction**

**Part 1. Policy scoping** – asks public authorities to provide details about the policy, procedure, practice and/or decision being screened and what available evidence you have gathered to help make an assessment of the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

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

**Part 3. Screening decision** – guides the public authority to reach a screening decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA), or to introduce measures to mitigate the

likely impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

**Part 4. Monitoring** – provides guidance to public authorities on monitoring for adverse impact and broader monitoring.

**Part 5. Approval and authorisation** – verifies the public authority's approval of a screening decision by a senior manager responsible for the policy.

## **Part 1. Policy scoping**

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context and set out the aims and objectives for the policy, being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

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

### **Information about the policy**

#### **Name of the policy:**

Consultation on proposed amendments to firearms licensing fees and the “banded system”.

#### **Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?**

Proposals are to amend existing policy.

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

Proposals to amend Schedule 1A “[Relevant firearms for Article 11\(4\)\(c\)](#)”, commonly referred to as the “banded system”, and Schedule 6 “[Fees](#)” of The Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 [“2004 Order”].

A review of firearms licensing fees, Schedule 6 of the 2004 Order, is necessary to appropriately fund the PSNI’s Firearms & Explosives Branch (PSNI FEB), who provide the service, to carry out the appropriate safety checks for the licensing of lethal barrelled weapons (firearms) and to also provide firearm certificate (FAC) holders with an efficient and sustainable service going forward.

Proposals to amend Schedule 1A of the 2004 Order, to add additional calibres of firearms that may be exchanged in a “one-off-one-on” transaction carried out by a registered firearms dealer (RFD), will reduce variation applications made to the Chief Constable which are more costly and take longer to process.

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

No, FACs are granted on the basis of fitness and good reason to possess each firearm/ammunition holding applied for, independent of the Section 75 categories to which they belong.

**Who initiated or wrote the policy?**

Proposals to amend Schedules 1A & 6 of the 2004 Order have been written by the Firearms & Explosives Branch within the Department of Justice (DoJ), who have responsibility for devolved firearms legislation, including these Schedules, following the devolution of Policing and Justice in 2010.

**Who owns and who implements the policy?**

The DoJ is the owner for the current proposals and will implement any final policy changes.

## Implementation factors

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

If yes, are they (please delete as appropriate)

Financial - the proposals to increase firearms licensing fees, as outlined in the consultation document, will primarily affect individual firearm users (approximately) 54,000 FAC holders and (approximately) 600 visitors to Northern Ireland who wish to obtain a visitor's firearm permit.

Also, some firearms related businesses e.g. RFD (approximately) 80, 92 firearms & shotgun clubs and farmers/game keepers who use firearms for pest control. There are also eight museums who have a firearms licence.

For a number of years, the budgetary shortfall for firearms licensing has been paid for/subsidised from PSNI's mainstream funding. The estimated shortfall for the financial year 2025/26 is £1,995,000.

Legislative – amendments to Schedule 1A can be made via regulations laid in draft before the NI Assembly for approval by resolution of the Assembly (i.e. draft affirmative procedure). Amendments to Schedule 6 can be made by statutory rule, subject to the negative resolution procedure in the Assembly.

## Main stakeholders affected

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

- FAC holders (approximately 54,000) when they apply for the further grant of their FAC in 2027-2030. Any new applicants following an increase in fees. Also, yearly firearms visitors to Northern Ireland who apply to PSNI FEB for a visitor's permit, approximately 600.
- Approximately 80 RFD, 92 firearm & shotgun clubs and eight museums.
- PSNI – including Firearms & Explosives Branch.

## Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- what are they?
  - who owns them?
1. Northern Ireland Audit Office, 2018 report, on [“Firearms licensing in Northern Ireland”](#)
  2. Department of Finance, [Managing Public Money Northern Ireland](#) (MPMNI) Chapter 6, “Fees, Charges and Levies”

## Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data. The Commission has produced this guide to [signpost to S75 data](#).

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

### **Religious belief** evidence / information:

- Applicants for FACs are not required to provide information regarding religious beliefs.

### **Political Opinion** evidence / information:

- Applicants for FACs are not required to provide information regarding political opinion.

### **Racial Group** evidence / information:

- Applicants for FACs are not required to provide information regarding race.

### **Age** evidence / information:

- Applicants for FACs are required to provide their date of birth. It is a requirement to be over the age of 18 to obtain a standard FAC, and to be aged 16-18 to avail of FAC provisions for young shooters. We know there are approximately 54,000 FAC holders in Northern Ireland.

### **Marital Status** evidence / information:

- An applicant will state their preferred title when making an application but this does not confirm their marital status.

### **Sexual Orientation** evidence / information:

- Applicants for FACs are not required to provide information regarding sexual orientation.

### **Men & Women generally** evidence / information:

- FAC applicants do state their gender on the application form. We know there are approximately 54,000 FAC holders in Northern Ireland. Historically, FAC holders have been predominately male.

### **Disability** evidence / information:

- FAC applicants are asked to declare certain medical conditions namely depression/mental health, physical disability, epilepsy, drug/alcohol abuse with an option for other health conditions. The evidence/information is used to satisfy the **fitness** aspect for granting a firearm certificate. Just because someone has a disability, it does not preclude them from having firearms if they are fit to possess same without danger to public safety or the peace.

## **Dependants' evidence / information:**

- When processing an application, the applicant may have an interview with a Firearms Enquiry Officer to assess the suitability of the home for the storage of firearms. Their assessment will include all individuals who live in the household regardless of dependant status.

## Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision?

Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below:

### Religious belief:

- N/A

### Political Opinion:

- N/A

### Racial Group:

- N/A

### Age:

- As the proposed changes to fees and the “banded system” are only amendments to current policy, we are not aware of any evidence that would suggest that there will be any different impact, of the proposed changes, on the needs, experiences or priorities of FAC users based on age.

## **Marital status:**

- As the proposed changes to fees and the “banded system” are only amendments to current policy, we are not aware of any evidence that would suggest that there will be any different impact, of the proposed changes, on the needs, experiences or priorities of FAC users based on their marital status.

## **Sexual orientation:**

- N/A

## **Men and Women Generally:**

- FAC holders are predominately male, therefore the proposed changes will have a different impact on the needs, experiences and priorities of men. If there is an increase in firearms fees a FAC will be more expensive when their current FAC expires. Both male and female FAC holders will benefit following the addition of calibres to the current “banded system”.

## **Disability:**

- As the proposed changes to fees and the “banded system” are only amendments to current policy, we are not aware of any evidence that would suggest that there will be any different impact, of the proposed changes, on the needs, experiences or priorities of FAC users based on their disability.

**Dependants:**

- As the proposed changes to fees and the “banded system” are only amendments to current policy, we are not aware of any evidence that would suggest that there will be any different impact, of the proposed changes, on the needs, experiences or priorities of FAC users based on their dependants.

## **Part 2. Screening questions**

### **Introduction**

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the questions 1-4 which are detailed below.

If the public authority's conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the public authority may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, a public authority should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the public authority's conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the public authority's conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

### **In favour of a 'major' impact**

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are

concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;

- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

### **In favour of 'minor' impact**

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

### **In favour of none**

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

## Screening questions

### 1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

Please provide details of the likely policy impacts and determine the level of impact for each S75 categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

- The impact of the proposed changes is largely financial, as current FAC holders will have to pay more to avail of firearms licensing; this comes at a time when many households are experiencing financial pressures due to the current economic climate. It is, however, important to note that without implementing the fee changes, the cost recovery position of PSNI FEB will deteriorate further as the costs to run the service continue to rise, with the increasing shortfall being met by PSNI and, ultimately, the taxpayer. It also affects the service that FAC applicants receive including delays in processing applications. FACs operate on a five-year cycle so many FAC holders who have been granted a FAC prior to 2026 will have 2,3,4 or 5 years remaining on their FAC, before they are affected by a fee increase.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence to suggest that the proposed changes will have a disproportionate impact on the equality of opportunity for those of different religious beliefs.

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

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence to suggest that the proposed changes will have a disproportionate impact on the equality of opportunity for those of different political opinions.

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

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence to suggest that the proposed changes will have a disproportionate impact on the equality of opportunity for those of different racial groupings.

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

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

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence to suggest that the proposed changes will have a disproportionate impact on the equality of opportunity for those of different ages.

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

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**:

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence to suggest that the proposed changes will have a disproportionate impact on the equality of opportunity based on a person's marital status.

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

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

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence to suggest that the proposed changes will have a disproportionate impact on the equality of opportunity based on a person's sexual orientation.

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

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**:

- As FAC holders are predominately male, the proposed changes will affect this gender more. If there is an increase in firearms fees a FAC will be more expensive when their current FAC expires. Both male and female FAC holders will benefit following the addition of calibres to the current “banded system”.

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

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

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence to suggest that the proposed changes will have a disproportionate impact on the equality of opportunity for those with a disability. There are no proposed changes to the criteria for fitness.

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

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

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence to suggest that the proposed changes will have a disproportionate impact on the equality of opportunity based on whether the FAC applicant has dependants.

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

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

Detail opportunities of how this policy could promote equality of opportunity for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

**Religious Belief** - ~~If Yes, provide details:~~

If No, provide reasons:

- DoJ does not consider that this policy provides any opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity for people of different religious beliefs.

**Political Opinion** - ~~If Yes, provide details:~~

If No, provide reasons

- DoJ does not consider that this policy provides any opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity for people with differing political opinions.

**Racial Group** - ~~If Yes, provide details:~~

If No, provide reasons

- DoJ does not consider that this policy provides any opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity for people from different racial groups.

**Age** - ~~If Yes, provide details:~~

If No, provide reasons:

- DoJ does not consider that the proposed changes to this policy provide any opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity for people of different ages.

**Marital Status** - ~~If Yes, provide details:~~

If No, provide reasons

- DoJ does not consider that the proposed changes to this policy provide any opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity for people based on marital status.

**Sexual Orientation** - ~~If Yes, provide details:~~

If No, provide reasons:

- DoJ does not consider that the proposed changes to this policy provide any opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity for people based on sexual orientation.

**Men and Women generally** - ~~If Yes, provide details:~~

If No, provide reasons:

- DoJ does not consider that the proposed changes to this policy provide any opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity for men or women generally.

**Disability** - ~~If Yes, provide details:~~

If No, provide reasons:

- DoJ does not consider that the proposed changes to this policy provide any opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity for people with a disability.

**Dependants** - ~~If Yes, provide details:~~

If No, provide reasons:

- DoJ does not consider that the proposed changes to this policy provide any opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity for dependants.

3. **To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

Please provide details of the likely policy impact and determine the level of impact for each of the categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence to suggest that the proposed changes will impact on good relations between people with different religious beliefs.

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

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence to suggest that the proposed changes will impact on good relations between people with different political opinions.

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

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence to suggest that the proposed changes will impact on good relations between people of different racial groups.

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

**4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

Detail opportunities of how this policy could better promote good relations for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

**Religious Belief** - ~~If Yes, provide details:~~

If No, provide reasons:

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence that the proposed changes to this policy provide any opportunity to better promote good relations between people with different religious beliefs.

**Political Opinion** - ~~If Yes, provide details:~~

If No, provide reasons

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence that the proposed changes to this policy provide any opportunity to better promote good relations between people with different political opinions.

**Racial Group** - ~~If Yes, provide details:~~

If No, provide reasons

- DoJ is not aware of any evidence that the proposed changes to this policy provide any opportunity to better promote good relations between people from different racial groups.

## 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).*

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

- The policy applies to all those who avail of a FAC, independent of the Section 75 categories under which they fall. As such, DoJ is not aware of any differential impact on the grounds of multiple identities for the reasons stated above.

### **Part 3. Screening decision**

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

- The proposals are to amend existing legislation to change firearm licensing fees and the number of firearms that may be exchanged in a “one-off-one-on” transaction carried out by a RFD.
- The impact of the proposed fee changes is largely financial. As FAC holders are predominately male the proposals will affect this category the most. FACs operate on a five-year cycle so many FAC holders who have been granted a FAC prior to 2026 will have 2,3,4 or 5 years remaining on their FAC, before they are affected by a fee increase.
- The fee proposals do not put firearms licences at a level above other licences for more common goods. The cost of the firearms licensing fees in fact remains well below the other licence types, for which there are no statutory fitness tests, vetting procedures or assessment of medical reports and good reasons to hold firearms, which are in fact lethal barrelled weapons.
- An EQIA is not deemed to be necessary, at this stage. Whilst FAC holders are predominately male, firearms ownership is optional. However, the equality screening will be reviewed again following the consultation process, when proposals are finalised.
- FACs are optional and applicants from any of the Section 75 categories can apply for a FAC if they have obtained the requisite age and satisfy the Chief Constable that they are a fit person to possess firearms, without danger to public safety or the peace, and they have good reason to possess each firearm applied for.

**If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced - please provide details.**

- The proposed changes are necessary to enable PSNI to strive towards a position of full cost recovery, a requirement under Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI). We want to ensure that PSNI FEB is appropriately funded to provide a safe, sustainable and effective service for the licensing of lethal barrelled weapons. In doing so it will eliminate the shortfall in receipts against the costs of providing the licensing service, which must be made up by PSNI mainstream funding and, ultimately, the taxpayer. This subsidy can then be redirected to other policing costs.

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

N/A

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

## Mitigation

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

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

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

- N/A

## Timetabling and prioritising

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been '**screened in**' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

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

Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations N/A

Social need N/A

Effect on people's daily lives N/A

Relevance to a public authority's functions N/A

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.

N/A

## Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

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

*DoJ recognises the importance of ensuring that robust monitoring and evaluation systems are in place following a fee increase, including:*

- *monitoring the effectiveness of the policy in achieving its objectives;*
- *monitoring the levels of fee income and cost recovery performance;*
- *monitoring user demand (volumes);*
- *recognising any unintended consequences.*

## **Part 5 - Approval and authorisation**

Screened by: Claire Duncan  
Position/Job Title: Staff Officer  
Date: 13 March 2026

Approved by: Jennifer Stewart  
Position/Job Title: Grade 7  
Date: 13 March 2026