



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Máinnystrie o tha Laa

DOJ Section 75

EQUALITY SCREENING FORM

Title of Policy:

**Measures to Improve Victim Engagement
in the Parole Process**

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 person 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.

The [flowchart](#) details the equality screening process.

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:

Measures to improve victim engagement in the Parole process.

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

If accepted, it will lead to the Parole Commissioners Rules 2009 being revised to incorporate the changes required.

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

The Department of Justice wants to improve the experience of victims of crime at all stages of the criminal justice process. The area of victim's involvement in the parole process is an emotive one and has gathered some press and Ministerial attention of late.

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

If so, explain how.

All groups should benefit from the potential changes as it will impact all victims regardless of their Section 75 category.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

These potential changes have been developed by officials in the Public Protection

Branch, Department of Justice.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The Minister of Justice and the Department of Justice own the policy. Officials in Public Protection Branch will take forward the legislative changes and the Parole Commissioners Northern Ireland will be responsible for implementing and incorporating any agreed 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)

legislative

Main stakeholders affected

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

The changes being sought would have an impact on victims of crime and offer them a chance to increase their involvement in the Parole process. The office of the Victims Commissioner for Northern Ireland will be engaged throughout the process.

The Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland (PCNI) would be impacted as their Rules would be updated, new guidance issued and revised operating procedures adopted.

The changes will also impact any other organisations involved in the Parole process, namely Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), Department of Justice (DOJ) and prisoners subject to a public protection sentence.

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

The policy may help in the development and delivery of the NI Victim and Witnesses Strategy and promoting the Victim and Witnesses Charter.

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:

In terms of the whole population, the 2021 census data indicates that 42.31% of all usual residents in NI gave their religion, or the religion they were brought up in as Catholic, and 37.36% as Protestant or other Christian. Other religions accounted for 1.34%, while 18.99% cited either having no religion or not having been brought up in a religion.

Source: [Census 2021 results | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

The decision is not expected to have a differential impact based on religious belief.

Political Opinion evidence / information:

In terms of the whole population, evidence from first preference votes per party in NI Assembly Elections 2022 indicates the following:

Sinn Fein	250,385	29.0%
DUP	184,002	21.3%
Alliance	116,681	13.5%
UUP	96,390	11.2%
SDLP	78,237	9.1%
TUV	65,788	7.6%
Other	71,217	8.2%

The decision is not expected to have a differential impact based on political opinion.

Racial Group evidence / information:

According to the 2021 census data, 96.55% of all usual residents in Northern

Ireland are of a white ethnic group. 0.76% of all usual residents are of a mixed ethnic group, 0.52% of an Indian ethnic group with a further 0.50% Chinese. 0.14% is of an Irish Traveller ethnic group.

95.37% of all usual residents aged 3 years or over indicated English as their main language with 1.10% indicating that Polish is their main language.

[Main statistics | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

The decision is not expected to have a differential impact based on racial group.

Age evidence / information:

According to the 2021 census, Northern Ireland has a population of just over 1.9 million people.

Number (percentage) of population by age group in 2021

Age Group	2021
0-14	365,213 (19.19%)
15-64	1,211,486 (63.66%)
65-84	287,084 (15.08%)
85+	39,391 (2.07%)

[Census 2021 results | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

The decision is not expected to have a differential impact based on age group.

Marital Status evidence / information:

The 2021 census reports that 48.76% of all usual residents aged 16 or over are married; 35.71% are single (never married or registered in a same sex civil partnership); 9.04% as either separated or divorced; 6.32 as widowed or surviving partner from a civil partnership and 0.17% are in a registered same-sex partnership.

Source: [Census 2021 results | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research](#)

Agency

The decision is not expected to have a differential impact based on marital status.

Sexual Orientation evidence / information:

According to the 2021 census, 90.04% respondents indicated that they were either straight or heterosexual; 1.17%, gay or lesbian; 0.75%, bisexual; 0.17% other sexual orientation; 4.58% prefer not to say; and 3.30% did not state their sexual orientation.

The decision is not expected to have a differential impact based on sexual orientation.

Men & Women generally evidence / information:

According to the 2021 NI census, the 1,903,175 population of Northern Ireland comprised of 967,047 females and 936,125 males, representing 51% and 49% respectively.

Source: [Census 2021 results | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

The decision is not expected to have a differential impact based on being a man or woman.

Disability evidence / information:

The NI Census 2021 indicates that 24.33% of the population consider themselves as disabled or living with a long-term health condition.

Policies outlined above considered to help inform screening assessment.

The decision is not expected to have a differential impact based on disability.

Dependants' evidence / information:

The decision is not expected to have a differential impact based on dependants.

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:

We believe that any accepted changes will be accessible and apply equally to all groups/individuals. We do not believe that any changes will have any significant differential effect on the needs, experiences and priorities of this category.

Political Opinion: Racial Group:

We believe that any accepted changes will be accessible and apply equally to all groups/individuals. We do not believe that any changes will have any significant differential effect on the needs, experiences and priorities of this category.

Age:

We believe that any accepted changes will be accessible and apply equally to all groups/individuals. We do not believe that any changes will have any significant differential effect on the needs, experiences and priorities of this category.

Marital status: Sexual orientation:

We believe that any accepted changes will be accessible and apply equally to all groups/individuals. We do not believe that any changes will have any significant differential effect on the needs, experiences and priorities of this category.

Men and Women Generally: Disability:

We believe that any accepted changes will be accessible and apply equally to all groups/individuals. We do not believe that any changes will have any significant differential effect on the needs, experiences and priorities of this category.

Dependants:

We believe that any accepted changes will be accessible and apply equally to all groups/individuals. We do not believe that any changes will have any significant differential effect on the needs, experiences and priorities of this category.

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.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**: Any proposed changes will be available equally to all victims of crime therefore there should be no adverse or differential impact on equality of opportunity on people of different religious belief.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: Any proposed changes will be available equally to all victims of crime therefore there should be no adverse or differential impact on equality of opportunity on people of different political opinion.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: Any proposed changes will be available equally to all victims of crime therefore there should be no adverse or differential impact on equality of opportunity on people of different racial groups.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**: Any proposed changes will be available equally to all victims of crime therefore there should be no adverse or differential impact on equality of opportunity on people of different ages.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**: Any proposed changes will be available equally to all victims of crime therefore there should be no adverse or differential impact on equality of opportunity on people of different marital status.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**: Any proposed changes will be available equally to all victims of crime therefore there should be no adverse or differential impact on equality of opportunity on people of different sexual orientation.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**: Any proposed changes will be available equally to all victims of crime therefore there should be no adverse or differential impact on equality of opportunity of men and women.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**: Any proposed changes will be available equally to all victims of crime therefore there should be no adverse or differential impact on equality of opportunity on people of different abilities.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**: Any proposed changes will be available equally to all victims of crime therefore there should be no adverse or differential impact on equality of opportunity on people who are dependants.

What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

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 - No – Any potential changes will represent all victims equally regardless of their religious belief.

Political Opinion - No – Any potential changes will represent all victims equally regardless of their political opinion.

Racial Group - No – Any potential changes will represent all victims equally regardless of their racial group.

Age - No – Any potential changes will represent all victims equally regardless of their age.

Marital Status - No – Any potential changes will represent all victims equally regardless of their marital status.

Sexual Orientation - No – Any potential changes will represent all victims equally regardless of their sexual orientation.

Men and Women generally - No – Any potential changes will represent all victims equally regardless if they are men or women.

Disability - No – Any potential changes will represent all victims equally regardless of their ability.

Dependants - No – Any potential changes will represent all victims equally regardless if they are 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**: The proposed changes are victim focused and while they may embrace victims with various religious beliefs, it is not likely to contribute directly to the promotion of good relations. What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: The proposed changes are victim focused and while they may embrace victims with various political opinions, it is not likely to contribute directly to the promotion of good relations. What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: The proposed changes are victim focused and while they may embrace victims with various racial groups, it is not likely to contribute directly to the promotion of good relations. What is the level of impact? Minor / Major / None
(Underline as appropriate)

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 - The proposed changes, which represent all victims of crime equally, could create a shared sense of representation. This may result in a minor positive impact on good relations between people of different religious belief.

Political Opinion - The proposed changes, which represent all victims of crime equally, could create a shared sense of representation. This may result in a minor positive impact on good relations between people of

different political opinion.

Racial Group - The proposed changes, which represent all victims of crime equally, could create a shared sense of representation. This may result in a minor positive impact on good relations between people of different racial group.

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.

We believe the new strategy will represent all groups / individuals equally.

Part 3. Screening decision

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

An EQIA has been 'screened out'. These proposed changes will impact on, and benefit, all sections of the community and seek to promote equality of service. During the development of these proposed changes, there has been no evidence from research or engagement with stakeholders to suggest that there will be negative effect on any one specific sector of the section 75 categories.

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.

This is not considered appropriate or necessary at this time.

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

Not applicable

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

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?

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](#)

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Wayne Morrison
Position/Job Title: DP – Public Protection Branch, DOJ
Date: 02/09/25

Approved by: Alison Redmond
Position/Job Title: Head of Public Protection Branch, DOJ
Date: 11/09/25

Prior to final approval the Screening Form should be forwarded to DOJESSS@justice-ni.gov.uk for comment/quality assurance. Contact the branch should you require advice or have any queries prior to this stage.

Any NIPS forms should also be forwarded to darren.smyth@justice-ni.gov.uk.

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 DoJ website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.

Separately from undertaking screening of the policy, consideration must also be given in respect of undertaking a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA). This is to ensure that public authorities comply with their duty under Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016. Full information including templates and a useful checklist are available on the DEARA Website: [Templates | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

The RNIA Form should be forwarded to DOJESSS@justice-ni.gov.uk for comment/quality assurance. Contact the branch should you require advice or have any queries prior to this stage.