

Screening flowchart and template (taken from Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for public authorities April 2010 (*Appendix 1*)).

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 assess the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

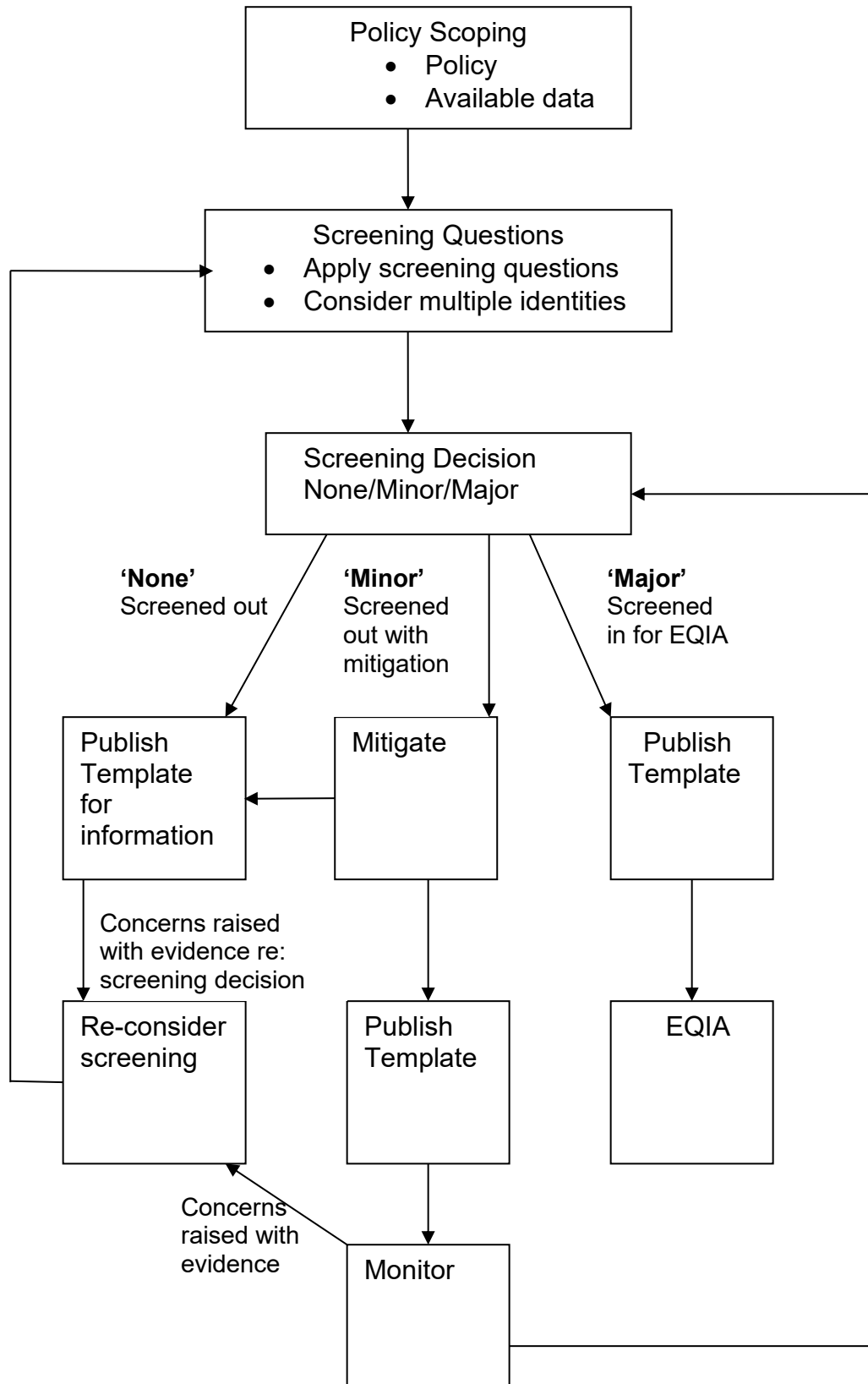
Part 2. Screening questions – asks about the extent of the likely impact of the policy on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories. Details of the groups consulted and the level of assessment of the likely impact. This includes consideration of multiple identity and good relations issues.

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.
Screened out with mitigation

Part 4. Monitoring – provides guidance to public authorities on monitoring for adverse impact and broader monitoring.
Monitoring will be conducted via OST and departmental reporting mechanisms; Quarterly screening reports and stakeholder feedback will inform adjustments; Data disaggregated by Section 75 categories will be used to assess impact

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

A screening flowchart is provided overleaf.



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

Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy for Northern Ireland – Consultation draft

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

New cross-Executive strategy framework proposed for public consultation

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

The AI Strategy sets out a cross-departmental framework to guide the safe, ethical, transparent and inclusive adoption of Artificial Intelligence across the Northern Ireland public sector to:

- establish shared principles and governance expectations for the use of AI;
- build capability, skills and literacy across the public sector;
- promote responsible innovation that improves public services and citizen outcomes;
- support transparency, accountability, human oversight and redress in the use of AI; and
- coordinate activity across departments and delivery partners to maximise societal and economic benefit.
- ensure that future AI-enabled policies, programmes and services are developed and deployed in a manner that is fair, inclusive, accessible and compliant with equality and human rights obligations.

While the Strategy does not mandate the deployment of specific AI systems, it establishes governance expectations that will apply to future AI-enabled initiatives. Departments and arm's-length bodies will be expected to consider equality, accessibility, fairness and potential impacts on Section 75 groups throughout the design, procurement, deployment and monitoring of AI-enabled services. This includes undertaking equality screening and, where appropriate, Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA), in accordance with statutory duties and departmental Equality Schemes.

The Strategy is enabling and strategic in nature and does not itself mandate the use of AI in specific services or functions.

While the Strategy does not directly determine individual service delivery or outcomes, it establishes a cross-cutting framework that will influence how future public services are designed, governed and delivered across the public sector.

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

At a strategic level, the Strategy is intended to benefit all citizens through improved public services, stronger safeguards and more consistent governance around AI use.

- **age** (addressing risks of digital exclusion through skills, literacy and accessible design);
- **disability** (promoting accessibility by design and responsive services);
- **racial group** (reducing risks of bias through transparency and governance);
- **men and women generally** (fair and consistent service delivery); and
- **persons with dependants** (potential reductions in administrative burden through more joined-up services).

However, any such benefits will depend on how individual AI initiatives are designed and implemented and will require assessment at programme or project level.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Strategy was drafted by the Chief Scientific and Technology Adviser with input from industry and academic partners at the request of First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The Strategy will be owned centrally by The Executive Office and implemented collaboratively across Executive departments and arm's-length bodies, working with academic, industry, community and civic stakeholders.

Implementation factors

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

Factors that could contribute to the intended aims/outcomes:

- **Robust governance, accountability and oversight** for AI use across departments/ALBs (incl. transparency and redress).
- **Strong data foundations** (data quality, data sharing where appropriate, privacy-by-design) and interoperable digital infrastructure.
- **Skills, training and culture change to an AI literate public sector workforce** (capability for staff, leaders and oversight teams; confidence to adopt responsibly).
- **Early, inclusive engagement** with citizens and stakeholders to build trust and improve design (including accessible formats and targeted outreach).
- **Resourcing and delivery discipline** (prioritised roadmap, measurable benefits, benefits-realisation and lessons learned).
- **Procurement approaches** that avoid vendor lock-in and support phased testing/safe experimentation ("sandboxes").

Factors that could detract from the intended aims/outcomes

- **Low public trust** in public-sector AI, poor transparency, or lack of clear routes for challenge/redress.
- **Digital exclusion/accessibility barriers** if services become more “digital by default” without alternatives and support.
- **Bias or unequal impacts** arising from data quality issues, model design, or lack of representative testing.
- **Inconsistent adoption across departments** leading to duplication, fragmented standards, and variable safeguards.
- **Insufficient skills/capacity** to procure, deploy, monitor and govern AI safely (including reliance on suppliers without internal understanding).
- **Cyber/security or data protection failures**, which could undermine confidence and create direct harms.
- **Unclear funding or overstretched delivery** leading to “strategy without implementation”.

Main stakeholders affected

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

- Public sector staff across departments and arm’s-length bodies.
- Users of public services.
- Voluntary, community and trade union organisations.
- Industry and academic partners.
- The wider public.

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- Programme for Government 2024–2027 including public service reform (Northern Ireland Executive)
- NICS People Strategy led by NICS Board (DfE / NICS Board)
- Data Strategy (DoF / NISRA)
- Digital Workplace Enablement Programme (DoF)
- Public Sector Transformation including the Digital maturity Assessment (TEO / Transformation Board)
- Relevant human rights, equality and data protection legislation

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.

At a strategic level, the Strategy is intended to benefit all citizens. In addition to population-level data, wider contextual evidence relevant to AI adoption and equality impacts has been considered. This includes evidence on digital skills, digital exclusion, and public trust in AI, as these are key factors influencing how different Section 75 groups may experience AI-enabled public services.

Policy Area	Measure	Data source
Population breakdown	1. Usual resident population	Census 2021 - NISRA flexible table builder

Additional contextual evidence relevant to equality impacts includes:

In addition to population-level data, wider contextual evidence has been considered to assess how different Section 75 groups may experience the adoption of AI across public services. This reflects the strategic nature of the policy and the importance of factors such as digital access, skills and public trust.

Digital skills disparities: Evidence indicates that digital skills are not evenly distributed across the population. Older people, particularly those aged 65 and over, are significantly more likely to report having no digital skills, and individuals who are economically inactive are also more likely to experience low levels of digital capability. This may affect the ability of some groups to access or benefit from AI-enabled public services.

(Source: NISRA Digital Skills Statistics 2025/26, referenced in Northern Ireland AI Strategy Consultation Report 2026)

Socio-economic inequalities: Individuals living in more deprived areas are less likely to have higher-level digital skills compared to those in less deprived areas. This may contribute to differential access to digital and AI-enabled services.

(Source: NISRA Digital Skills Statistics 2025/26, referenced in Northern Ireland AI Strategy Consultation Report 2026)

Age-related digital exclusion: There is clear evidence that age is a key factor in digital exclusion, with older people disproportionately affected. This is relevant to the Strategy's emphasis on digital and AI literacy and the potential for services to become more digitally enabled over time.

(Source: NISRA Digital Skills Statistics 2025/26, referenced in Northern Ireland AI Strategy Consultation Report 2026)

Public trust in AI: Evidence indicates relatively low levels of public trust in the use of AI by public bodies. This may influence how different groups perceive fairness, transparency and accountability in public decision-making, which is particularly relevant in the Northern Ireland context.

(Source: Ulster University AI Pulse Public Sentiment Report 2025, referenced in Northern Ireland AI Strategy Consultation Report 2026)

Digital exclusion as a systemic risk: Digital exclusion is identified as a key risk in the adoption of AI-enabled public services, particularly where services become more digital by default without appropriate alternatives and support mechanisms.

(Source: Northern Ireland AI Strategy Consultation Report 2026)

Monitoring

In line with the departmental Equality Scheme, TEO will monitor the impact of the AI strategy. It will be monitored through the Equality Matters website which is due to launch later in 2025/26.

Statistics

When interpreting the findings in this paper, please note the following:

- **Rounding:** Percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer and may therefore not sum to 100%.

Summary of data

Population of NI 2021

Source: [Census 2021 - NISRA flexible table builder](#)

This measure records the Usual Resident Population in NI in 2021 and is sourced from the Census.

Age

- When the measure is summarised by Age Group the breakdown is as follows:
 - 0-15 is 20%.
 - 25-34 is 13%.
 - 35-44 is 13%.
 - 45-54 is 13%.
 - 55-64 is 13%.
 - 16-24 is 11%.
 - 65-74 is 9%.
 - 75+ is 8%.

Disability

- When the measure is summarised by Disability Status the breakdown is as follows:
Not disabled is 76%.
Disabled is 24%.

Marital Status

- When the measure is summarised by Marital Status the breakdown is as follows:
Married/Civil partnership is 36%.
Single is 30%.
Divorced is 5%.
Widowed is 5%.
Separated is 3%.
No code required* is 20%

Racial group

- When the measure is summarised by Racial Group the breakdown is as follows:
Category 1 (White ethnicity: British/Irish/Northern Irish only and Christian/no religion/religion not stated) is 92%.
Category 2 (White ethnicity: all others) is 5%.
Category 3 (Non-white ethnicity) is 3%.

Religion

- When the measure is summarised by Religious Belief the breakdown is as follows:
Catholic is 42%.
Protestant and other Christian is 37%.
No religion/religion not stated is 19%.
Other is 1%.

Sex

- When the measure is summarised by Sex the breakdown is as follows:
Female is 51%.
Male is 49%.

Sexual Orientation

- When the measure is summarised by Sexual Orientation the breakdown is as follows:
Straight or heterosexual is 72%.
Prefer not to say/not stated is 6%.
Gay, lesbian, bisexual or other is 2%.

* See additional notes on category definitions in table 1.

Table 1: Usual resident population 2021

Age Group	%
0-15	20
16-24	11
25-34	13
35-44	13
45-54	13
55-64	13
65-74	9
75+	8
Disability Status	
Disabled	24
Not disabled	76
Marital Status	
Single	30
Married/Civil partnership	36
Separated	3
Divorced	5
Widowed	5
No code required*	20
Racial Group	
Category 1	92
Category 2	5
Category 3	3
Religious Belief	
Catholic	42
Protestant and other Christian	37
Other	1
No religion/religion not stated	19
Sex	
Female	51
Male	49
Sexual Orientation	
Straight or heterosexual	72
Gay, lesbian, bisexual or other	2
Prefer not to say/not stated	6

* Marital and Civil Partnership Status applies to all people aged 16 and over. As such, this variable reports 'No code required' for the subset of the population where no response was expected.

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

Confidence that AI-enabled public services are impartial and do not disadvantage people from any faith background, clear routes to query decisions.

Political Opinion

Confidence that AI-enabled public services are impartial and do not disadvantage people from any Political background, clear routes to query decisions.

Racial Group

Confidence that AI-enabled public services are impartial and do not disadvantage people from any racial group, clear routes to query decisions.

Age

People of different ages may have different levels of access to devices, connectivity and digital skills/AI literacy. There is a particular need to avoid digital exclusion (including for some older people and some younger people without reliable access), to provide clear support and guidance, and to ensure any future AI-enabled services remain accessible with appropriate alternatives.

Marital status

No specific needs, experiences or priorities have been identified at Strategy level in relation to marital status. Any impacts (if any) would be more likely to arise at the design stage of individual initiatives and will be considered through project-level screening/assessment.

Sexual orientation

Assurance of confidentiality/privacy and non-discriminatory treatment; inclusive service design; and safe engagement routes (including for those who may avoid disclosing identity).

Men and Women Generally

No adverse needs or differential impacts have been identified at Strategy level for men and women generally. A priority for implementation will be to ensure skills, training and engagement activity is inclusive and considers under-representation (including opportunities to encourage women into AI/STEAM pathways where relevant).

Disability

Need for accessibility by design in any AI-enabled services (including compatibility with assistive technologies), clear explanations and human oversight, and availability of alternative channels/support where digital tools are not accessible. Implementation should ensure that future projects assess accessibility impacts and provide reasonable adjustments.

Persons with dependants Priorities may include simpler, more joined-up interactions with public services (to reduce time burden), clarity about decisions, and the ability to access support through channels that fit caring responsibilities (e.g., non-digital options, flexible contact routes). Any service changes arising from the Strategy will be assessed at project level.

Part 2. Screening questions

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 Strategy is strategic, high-level and enabling in nature. It does not directly determine service delivery, eligibility, resource allocation or individual outcomes for any Section 75 group.

However, the Strategy identifies a range of potential risks associated with AI adoption, including digital exclusion, differential access to technology and skills, risks of bias in AI systems, and variations in levels of public trust. These issues are not created by the Strategy itself, but they are relevant to how AI may be implemented across public services.

As a cross-cutting framework, it has the potential to influence how public services are designed, governed and delivered, and therefore may have indirect implications for equality of opportunity and good relations.

These potential impacts are primarily indirect and contingent on implementation. However, given the scale and cross-Executive nature of the Strategy, they are relevant to understanding how equality outcomes may emerge over time.

Level of impact for all Section 75 categories: Minor (potential)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**: No direct impact at Strategy level.

What is the level of impact?

- Potential for perceived fairness of AI-enabled decision-making to influence confidence across communities at implementation stage.
- There is also potential for differing perceptions of fairness and impartiality where automated or AI-supported decision-making is involved, which may vary across communities with different religious backgrounds.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: No direct impact at Strategy level.

What is the level of impact?

- Potential for perceptions of bias or impartiality in automated or AI-supported decision-making to affect trust.

- There may be variation in levels of trust and acceptance of AI-enabled decision-making across different political perspectives, particularly in relation to perceptions of neutrality and accountability in public services.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: No direct impact at Strategy level.
What is the level of impact?

- Potential risk of algorithmic bias where systems are trained on unrepresentative data or insufficiently tested across diverse groups.
- There is potential for compounded impacts where race intersects with language barriers or digital access, which may affect engagement with AI-enabled services and increase the importance of inclusive design and representative data.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**: No direct impact at Strategy level.
What is the level of impact?

- Potential for differential access and outcomes due to varying levels of digital access, skills and AI literacy, particularly for older people and some younger groups.
- There is also potential for compounded disadvantage where age intersects with socio-economic status or disability, which may increase the risk of digital exclusion.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**: No direct impact identified at Strategy level.

What is the level of impact?

- Any impacts would arise at the design stage of individual services or interventions.
- While no direct impacts are identified, there is potential for indirect relevance where service interactions associated with family or household circumstances are affected by digital access or service design.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**: No direct impact at Strategy level.

What is the level of impact?

- There may be a need to ensure that AI-enabled systems appropriately protect sensitive personal data and do not inadvertently create barriers to safe or confident engagement for individuals in this group.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**: No direct impact at Strategy level.

What is the level of impact?

- There is potential for differential participation in AI-related skills development and employment opportunities, which may reflect existing patterns of representation in digital and technology fields.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**: No direct impact at Strategy level.

What is the level of impact?

- Potential accessibility impacts if AI-enabled services are not designed to be compatible with assistive technologies or lack appropriate alternatives.
- There is also potential for compounded disadvantage where disability intersects with digital exclusion, particularly where assistive technologies or non-digital alternatives are not fully considered.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**: No direct impact at Strategy level.

What is the level of impact?

- Potential for both positive impacts (e.g. reduced administrative burden) and differential impacts depending on how services are accessed and delivered.
- There may be variation in how individuals with caring responsibilities access AI-enabled services, particularly where time constraints or reliance on flexible service channels affect engagement.

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:

At a strategic level, the Strategy provides opportunities to promote equality of opportunity through:

- inclusive design, accessibility and digital inclusion principles;
- requirements for fairness, transparency, accountability and human oversight;
- measures to identify, assess and mitigate risks of bias in AI systems;
- skills, digital literacy and public awareness initiatives;
- governance processes that require equality screening, accessibility considerations and assessment of impacts on Section 75 groups at implementation stage; and

- ongoing engagement with citizens and representative organisations to help ensure AI-enabled services are designed and delivered in an inclusive and trustworthy manner.

A core objective of the Strategy is to support the responsible adoption of AI in a way that promotes inclusion, accessibility and public trust while reducing the risks of digital exclusion, bias and unequal outcomes.

These opportunities will be realised and assessed further through departmental implementation.

Other opportunities will be explored during the consultation process, utilising both qualitative data gathering and quantitative data analysis through targeted stakeholder discussions.

Religious Belief - If Yes, provide details:

Opportunity through inclusive engagement and transparency, helping build trust that future AI use is impartial and includes clear routes to query decisions and seek redress.

Political Opinion - If Yes, provide details:

Opportunity through politically neutral principles, transparency and consistent governance, supporting confidence that AI is used fairly and decisions can be queried.

Racial Group - If Yes, provide details:

Opportunity to reduce risk of bias in future AI use-cases through stronger governance, transparency, representative testing and monitoring expectations.

Age - If Yes, provide details:

Opportunity to address digital inclusion/AI literacy (including for older people) through skills and support commitments and by encouraging accessible design and alternative channels in future delivery.

Marital Status - If Yes, provide details:

No specific opportunity has been identified at Strategy level in relation to marital status beyond the general opportunity of fair, consistent service design across all groups.

Sexual Orientation - If Yes, provide details:

Opportunity to reinforce confidentiality/privacy, inclusive engagement and non-discriminatory service design principles in future AI use-cases, including providing safe routes to raise concerns.

Men and Women generally - If Yes, provide details:

Opportunity to support inclusive skills and capability activity, including targeted outreach where appropriate to address under-representation (for example, encouraging women's participation in AI/STEAM pathways through engagement events).

Disability - If Yes, provide details:

Opportunity to embed accessibility by design and human oversight expectations into future AI projects, and to ensure appropriate alternatives/support are considered at implementation stage.

Dependants - If Yes, provide details:

Opportunity for future initiatives to simplify interactions with public services and reduce administrative burden for those with caring responsibilities, subject to inclusive implementation and project-level assessment.

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.

The Strategy is politically neutral and does not directly affect relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

However, the Strategy recognises that the use of AI in public services may influence **perceptions of fairness, transparency and impartiality in public decision-making**. This is a relevant consideration in the Northern Ireland context, where trust in public institutions and perceptions of fairness are particularly important.

Level of impact on good relations: Minor (potential)

No direct impacts arise at Strategy level, but the way in which AI is implemented could influence trust and confidence across communities if not managed appropriately.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**: Minor (potential)

What is the level of impact?

- While no direct impact arises at Strategy level, there is potential for indirect effects on perceptions of fairness and impartiality in AI-enabled decision-making at implementation stage.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: Minor (potential)

What is the level of impact?

- While no direct impact arises at Strategy level, there is potential for indirect effects on trust and perceptions of neutrality in AI-supported public sector decisions.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: Minor (potential)

What is the level of impact?

- While no direct impact arises at Strategy level, there is potential for indirect impacts due to known risks of bias in AI systems and the need for representative design and testing at implementation stage.

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:

The Strategy provides opportunities to promote good relations through the development of transparent, consistent and impartial approaches to decision-making in public services. By embedding principles such as fairness, accountability and human oversight, the Strategy has the potential to support confidence across communities with different religious beliefs that public services are delivered in a fair and unbiased manner.

These opportunities will depend on effective implementation, including engagement with diverse communities and clear communication about how AI is used.

Political Opinion - If Yes, provide details:

The Strategy provides opportunities to promote good relations by supporting politically neutral, transparent and accountable use of AI across public services. This may help reinforce confidence across people with different political opinions that decisions are made fairly and consistently.

Opportunities will be influenced by how effectively governance, oversight and communication arrangements are implemented in practice.

Racial Group - If Yes, provide details:

The Strategy provides opportunities to promote good relations through its emphasis on fairness, transparency and the mitigation of bias in AI systems. By encouraging inclusive design and appropriate testing of AI-enabled services, the Strategy may contribute to increased confidence among different racial groups that services are delivered equitably.

Realisation of these opportunities will depend on ensuring diverse representation and inclusive practices at implementation stage.

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).

While no specific impacts can be quantified at this strategic stage, there is potential for compounded impacts where multiple characteristics intersect (for example, older people with disabilities, or individuals from deprived backgrounds with limited digital access). These risks are primarily linked to digital exclusion and differential access to skills and will require consideration at implementation stage.

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

At this strategic stage, there is limited disaggregated data available specifically on the impact of AI adoption on people with multiple Section 75 characteristics.

However, relevant contextual evidence indicates that risks associated with digital exclusion, access to technology, and digital skills may be more pronounced where characteristics intersect. For example, evidence shows that older people, individuals with disabilities, and those from more socio-economically deprived backgrounds are more likely to experience lower levels of digital skills and access.

This suggests that individuals with multiple identities (for example, older people with disabilities, or individuals in deprived areas with caring responsibilities) may face compounded barriers in accessing or benefiting from AI-enabled public services.

These potential impacts are indirect and contingent on implementation and will require further consideration at programme, policy or project level where more detailed data becomes available.

The consultation process will provide an opportunity for individuals, representative organisations and equality stakeholders to submit additional evidence relating to potential impacts on Section 75 groups, including issues relating to digital exclusion, accessibility, public trust and algorithmic bias. This evidence will be used to inform the final Strategy and any future equality assessments.

The Executive Office will continue to seek and gather relevant evidence as implementation progresses and will review future evidence to determine whether further screening or assessment is required.

(Source: NISRA Digital Skills Statistics 2025/26, referenced in Northern Ireland AI Strategy Consultation Report 2026)

Part 3. Screening decision

Screened out with mitigation (no EQIA required at this stage)

The draft AI Strategy is strategic, high-level and enabling in nature. It establishes principles, governance expectations and a framework for the responsible adoption of AI across the public sector. While it does not directly determine individual service delivery, eligibility, resource allocation or outcomes, it will influence how future policies, services and programmes are designed, governed and implemented.

The screening has identified that no direct equality impacts arise at this stage. However, as a cross-cutting framework, the Strategy has the potential to give rise to indirect or differential impacts over time, depending on how AI-enabled services are designed, deployed and governed.

These potential impacts relate to recognised issues associated with AI adoption, including digital exclusion, accessibility, algorithmic bias, and variations in levels of public trust and confidence. While these risks are not directly attributable to the Strategy itself, the Strategy shapes the conditions under which AI will be adopted and therefore has an important role in establishing expectations around fairness, inclusion, transparency and accountability.

Given the strategic and enabling nature of the policy, the potential impacts identified are considered to be minor at this stage. This is because:

1. the impacts are indirect and contingent on future implementation decisions;
2. the Strategy does not introduce operational changes or target specific groups;
3. the potential risks identified are well understood and can be managed through governance, safeguards and mitigation measures embedded within the Strategy; and
4. there is insufficient evidence at Strategy level to identify specific adverse impacts on particular Section 75 groups with any degree of certainty.

Mitigation is embedded within the Strategy through the principles, governance framework and implementation expectations it establishes. These include commitments to fairness, inclusion, accessibility, transparency, accountability, human oversight and public trust. The Strategy also establishes expectations that departments and arm's-length bodies will consider equality impacts when developing AI-enabled services and will undertake equality screening and, where appropriate, EQIA before deployment. These measures are intended to minimise the risk of adverse impacts and promote equality of opportunity as AI adoption progresses.

The Strategy will also be subject to public consultation, and equality impacts will be kept under review as further evidence becomes available. Consultees will be invited to provide additional evidence relating to equality impacts, accessibility, digital exclusion and algorithmic bias, which will inform the final Strategy and any future screening or assessment activity.

Where appropriate, further screening and/or Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken at programme, policy or project level.

On this basis, a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is not considered proportionate at this stage, and the policy is screened out with mitigation.

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.

Mitigation is embedded within the Strategy through its principles, governance framework and implementation expectations, including accessibility requirements, bias mitigation, stakeholder engagement, ongoing monitoring and the requirement for equality screening and, where appropriate, EQIA at implementation stage.

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

- **Not subject to an EQIA (Equality Impact Assessment)**

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.

While the Strategy itself is strategic and enabling in nature, mitigation will be delivered through the governance framework and implementation requirements that it establishes.

Mitigation will be supported through:

- the application of the Strategy's core principles, including fairness, transparency, accountability and human oversight;
- inclusive design requirements that promote accessibility, digital inclusion and the availability of alternative (non-digital) channels where appropriate;
- governance requirements for departments and arm's-length bodies developing or deploying AI-enabled services, including consideration of equality, accessibility and potential impacts on Section 75 groups;
- requirements for transparency, clear communication and accessible routes for challenge, review and redress;
- expectations that AI systems are appropriately tested, validated and monitored for bias, fairness, accessibility and differential impacts across user groups;
- ongoing stakeholder engagement, including engagement with organisations representing Section 75 groups;
- the systematic application of equality screening and, where appropriate, Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for subsequent policies, programmes and AI-enabled projects arising from the Strategy; and
- periodic review of evidence, consultation feedback and monitoring information to identify and address emerging equality issues.

The Strategy will be subject to public consultation, and consultees will be invited to provide evidence relating to equality impacts, accessibility, digital exclusion and bias. Equality considerations will remain under review throughout implementation, and the Strategy may be reconsidered, re-screened or subject to further assessment should significant new evidence or impacts emerge.

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.

Not applicable – this policy has been screened out for EQIA.

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	N/A (screened out)
Social need	N/A (screened out)
Effect on people's daily lives	N/A (screened out)
Relevance to a public authority's functions	N/A (screened out)

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.

Part 4. Monitoring

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

Monitoring will be carried out through established governance and reporting mechanisms, including oversight by The Executive Office and relevant departmental governance structures.

As AI-enabled initiatives are developed under the Strategy, departments and arm's-length bodies will be expected to consider equality impacts as part of project governance, implementation and review processes.

Monitoring information may include:

- equality screening outcomes;
- EQIA findings where undertaken;
- consultation feedback;
- stakeholder engagement with Section 75 representative organisations;
- complaints, challenges and redress mechanisms;
- accessibility issues identified through implementation; and
- emerging evidence relating to bias, digital exclusion and differential impacts.

Where relevant information is available and proportionate to collect, impacts on service users will be considered with reference to Section 75 categories. Findings will be used to inform future policy development, governance arrangements and mitigation measures.

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.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Adam Steed
Position/Job Title: EO – Office of AI & Digital
Date: 30/06/2026

Approved by: Louse Long
Position/Job Title: Director of the Office of Science and Technology (G6)
Date: 30/06/2026

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 public authority's website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.