



Equality Screening Template – Section 75 of Northern Ireland Act 1998

Please complete the coversheet details below:

Policy title: Review of Level 4 and 5 Provision and Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE)

Decision (delete as appropriate)

Policy screened out **without** mitigation or an alternative policy adopted

Contact: Alan Thompson

Date of completion: 15/11/2022

Content

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.

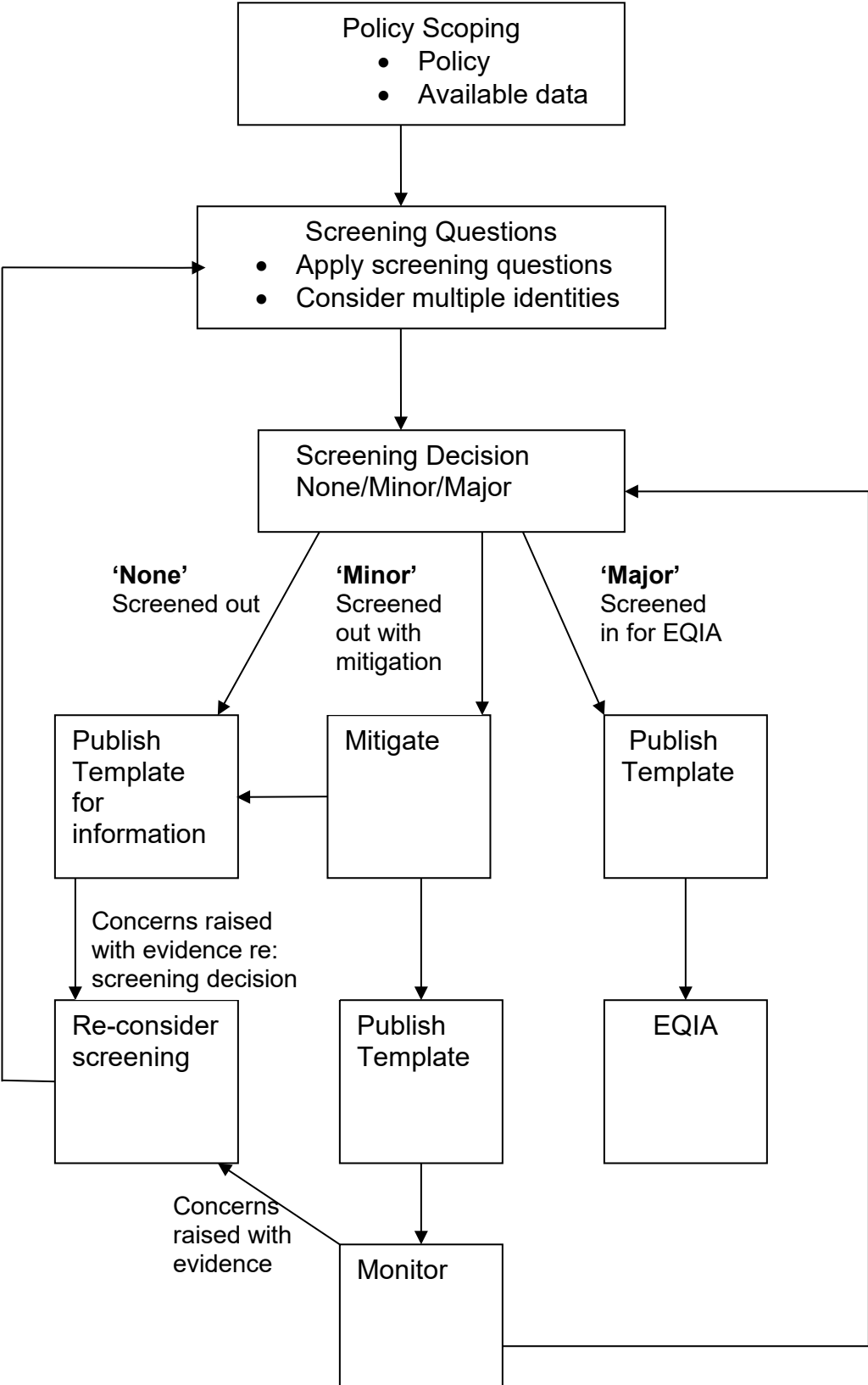
Part 2. Screening questions – asks about the extent of the likely impact of the policy on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories. Details of the groups consulted and the level of assessment of the likely impact. This includes consideration of multiple identity and good relations issues.

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.

Flowchart for the equality screening process and decision.



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

Review of Level 4 and 5 Provision and Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE)

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

Existing

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

Enrolments in HE in FE (primarily at level 4 and 5 on national qualifications frameworks) have been in decline since 2016/17 and both the 2019 and 2021 Skills Barometer have identified a need for more qualified people at level 4 and 5. The decline and identified under-supply have prompted the need for a review.

The Department's aim was to review the current position in relation to the Level 4 and 5 provision and HE in FE and identify a number of recommendations for the future approach. The proposed recommendations resulting from the Review are outlined in the overview paper¹ and those recommendations relating to the strategic context and policy are also set out in the public consultation document. The aim of these proposed recommendations is to ensure that provision at this

¹ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/review-level-4-and-5-provision-and-higher-education-further-education-he-fe>

level can effectively serve the needs of the Northern Ireland economy and its citizens.

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

All Section 75 categories would benefit from a Level 4 and 5 and HE in FE offering that effectively serves the needs of the Northern Ireland economy and its citizens.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

Department for the Economy (DfE), Tertiary Education Reform (TER) Division.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

DfE TER Division.

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

Main stakeholders affected

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

staff

service users

other public sector organisations

voluntary/community/trade unions

other, please specify – HE providers, all potential HE students and potentially some existing HE in FE students.

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- what are they?
- who owns them?

DfE HE, FE, vocational education, skills and economic policy all relevant.

- **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:

It is hoped the implementation of the review recommendations will result in a more effective offering at level 4 and 5 and HE delivered in the FE colleges. With the ongoing decline in enrolments this review and recommendations are an opportunity to increase enrolments from all members of society including those of differing religious belief. In the 2020/21 academic year 36% of HE enrolments at Further Education Colleges (FEC) stated they were Roman Catholic and 16% Protestant.

2020/21 HE enrolments at Further Education Colleges.

Religion	Enrolments
Catholic	3,637
Protestant	1,638
Other Christian	639
Other Religion	254
None	2,591
Unknown	1,275
Total	10,034

Political Opinion evidence / information:

It is hoped the implementation of the review recommendations will result in a more effective offering at level 4 and 5 and HE delivered in the FE colleges. With the ongoing decline in enrolments this review and recommendations are an opportunity to increase enrolments from all members of society including those of differing Political Opinion. No information has been gathered in respect of Political Opinion.

Racial Group evidence / information:

It is hoped the implementation of the review recommendations will result in a more effective offering at level 4 and 5 and HE delivered in the FE colleges. With the ongoing decline in enrolments this review and recommendations are an opportunity to increase enrolments from all members of society including those of differing Racial Groups. In 2020/21 academic year approximately 13% of HE enrolments within FECs were non-white.

Ethnicity	Enrolments
White	8,714
Black Caribbean	7
Black African	26

Black Other	6
Indian	26
Pakistani	16
Chinese	28
Mixed Other	59
Other	148
Unknown	1,004
Total	10,034

Age evidence / information:

People must be aged 18 or over to enrol on level 4 and 5 HE course and under 18s are excluded by virtue of age. It is hoped the implementation of the review recommendations will result in a more effective offering at level 4 and 5 and HE delivered in the FE colleges. With the ongoing decline in enrolments this review and recommendations are an opportunity to increase enrolments from all members of society from 18 years old and over. Currently the Department targets adult learners as an under-represented in higher education. In 2020/21 over 42% of HE enrolments in FECs was over the age of 25.

Marital Status evidence / information:

It is hoped the implementation of the review recommendations will result in a more effective offering at level 4 and 5 and HE delivered in the FE colleges. With the ongoing decline in enrolments this review and recommendations are an opportunity to increase enrolments from all members of society including those of differing Marital Status. In 2020/21 approximately one third of HE enrolments in FECs were not single.

Marital Status	Enrolments
Single	6,731
Married/Civil partnership	1,639
Separated/Divorced/Dissolved	291
Widowed/Surviving civil partner	31
Unknown	1,342
Total	10,034

Sexual Orientation evidence / information:

It is hoped the implementation of the review recommendations will result in a more effective offering at level 4 and 5 and HE delivered in the FE colleges. With the ongoing decline in enrolments this review and recommendations are an opportunity to increase enrolments from all members of society including those of differing Sexual Orientation. In 2020/21 almost 5% of HE enrolments identified as non-heterosexual.

Sexual Orientation	Enrolments
Heterosexual	7,287
Bisexual	226
Gay	123
Lesbian	56
Other	47
Not Stated/Unknown	2,295
Total	10,034

Men & Women generally evidence / information:

It is hoped the implementation of the review recommendations will result in a more effective offering at level 4 and 5 and HE delivered in the FE colleges. With the ongoing decline in enrolments this review and recommendations are an opportunity to increase enrolments from all members of society including men and women.

Gender	Enrolments
Male	4,940
Female	5,094
Total	10,034

Disability evidence / information:

It is hoped the review recommendations will result in a more effective offering at level 4 and 5 and HE delivered in the FE colleges. With the ongoing decline in enrolments this review and recommendations are an opportunity to increase enrolments from all members of society regardless of disability. In 2020/21 4% of HE enrolments in the FECs self-declared a disability.

Dependants evidence / information:

It is hoped the implementation of the review recommendations will result in a more effective offering at level 4 and 5 and HE delivered in the FE colleges. With the ongoing decline in enrolments this review and recommendations are an opportunity to increase enrolments from all members of society regardless of whether they have dependents or not. In 2020/21 over 17% of HE enrolments in FECs identified as having responsibility for a dependent (either adult, child or with a disability)

Dependents	Enrolments
No	8,326
Yes	1,708
Total	10,034

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

HE in FE and Level 4 and 5 courses are easily accessible, available in local communities and offer an opportunity for many people who would not normally consider HE. It is hoped the implementation of the recommendations leading from the review will improve the offering in place for all members of society including those of differing religious belief. The plan is to carry out a public consultation on the recommendations relating to strategic context and policy to ensure a wide range of people and stakeholders can express their opinions and help shape the policy in this area.

Political Opinion

HE in FE and Level 4 and 5 courses are easily accessible, available in local communities and offer an opportunity for many people who would not normally consider HE. It is hoped the implementation of the recommendations leading from the review will improve the offering in place for all members of society including those of differing political opinion. The plan is to carry out a public consultation on the recommendations relating to strategic context and policy to ensure a wide range of people and stakeholders can express their opinions and help shape the policy in this area.

Racial Group

HE in FE and Level 4 and 5 courses are easily accessible, available in local communities and offer an opportunity for many people who would not normally consider HE. It is hoped the implementation of the recommendations leading from the review will improve the offering in place for all members of society including those of differing racial group. The plan is to carry out a public consultation on the recommendations relating to strategic context and policy to ensure a wide range of people and stakeholders can express their opinions and help shape the policy in this area.

Age

HE in FE and Level 4 and 5 courses are easily accessible, available in local communities and offer an opportunity for many people who would not normally consider HE. It is hoped the implementation of the recommendations leading from the review will improve the offering in place for all members of society including those of differing ages. The plan is to carry out a public consultation on the recommendations relating to strategic context and policy to ensure a wide range of people and stakeholders can express their opinions and help shape the policy in this area.

Marital status

HE in FE and Level 4 and 5 courses are easily accessible, available in local communities and offer an opportunity for many people who would not normally consider HE. It is hoped the implementation of the recommendations leading from the review will improve the offering in place for all members of society including those of differing marital status. The plan is to carry out a public consultation on the recommendations relating to strategic context and policy to ensure a wide range of people and stakeholders can express their opinions and help shape the policy in this area.

Sexual orientation

HE in FE and Level 4 and 5 courses are easily accessible, available in local communities and offer an opportunity for many people who would not normally consider HE. It is hoped the implementation of the recommendations leading from the review will improve the offering in place for all members of society including those of differing sexual orientation. The plan is to carry out a public consultation on the recommendations relating to strategic context and policy to ensure a wide range of people and stakeholders can express their opinions and help shape the policy in this area.

Men and Women Generally

HE in FE and Level 4 and 5 courses are easily accessible, available in local communities and offer an opportunity for many people who would not normally consider HE. It is hoped the implementation of the recommendations leading from the review will improve the offering in place for all members of society including men and women. The plan is to carry out a public consultation on the recommendations relating to strategic context and policy to ensure a wide range of people and stakeholders can express their opinions and help shape the policy in this area.

Disability

HE in FE and Level 4 and 5 courses are easily accessible, available in local communities and offer an opportunity for many people who would not normally consider HE. It is hoped the implementation of the recommendations leading from the review will improve the offering in place for all members of society including those with disabilities. The plan is to carry out a public consultation on the recommendations relating to strategic context and policy to ensure a wide range of people and stakeholders can express their opinions and help shape the policy in this area.

Dependants

HE in FE and Level 4 and 5 courses are easily accessible, available in local communities and offer an opportunity for many people who would not normally consider HE. It is hoped the implementation of the recommendations leading from the review will improve the offering in place for all members of society including those with dependents. The plan is to carry out a public consultation on the recommendations relating to strategic context and policy to ensure

a wide range of people and stakeholders can express their opinions and help shape the policy in this area.

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 Screening Questions 1-4, which follow.

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**:

The review recommendations and consultation will allow development of an inclusive offering.

What is the level of impact? None

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

As above

What is the level of impact? None

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

As above

What is the level of impact? None

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

As above

What is the level of impact? None

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

As above

What is the level of impact? None

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

As above

What is the level of impact? None

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

As above

What is the level of impact? None

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

As above

What is the level of impact? None

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

As above

What is the level of impact? None

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

Yes

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: Improve the offering of HE in FE and Level 4 and 5 for all members of society taking into consideration any barriers preventing access to HE.

If No, provide reasons:

Political Opinion –

If Yes, provide details: As above

If No, provide reasons:

Racial Group –

If Yes, provide details: As above

If No, provide reasons:

Age –

If Yes, provide details: As above

If No, provide reasons:

Marital Status –

If Yes, provide details: As above

If No, provide reasons:

Sexual Orientation –

If Yes, provide details: As above

If No, provide reasons:

Men and Women generally –

If Yes, provide details: As above

If No, provide reasons:

Disability –

If Yes, provide details: As above

If No, provide reasons:

Dependants –

If Yes, provide details: As above

If No, provide reasons:

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 review will be unlikely to impact on good relations.

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on Political Opinion:

The review will be unlikely to impact on good relations.

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on Racial Group:

The review will be unlikely to impact on good relations.

What is the level of impact? 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:. The review would potentially offer opportunities for improved interactions between people from various backgrounds if enrolments for HE in FE and level 4 and 5 increased.

If No, provide reasons:

Political Opinion –

If Yes, provide details: The review would potentially offer opportunities for improved interactions between people from various backgrounds if enrolments for HE in FE and level 4 and 5 increased.

If No, provide reasons

Racial Group –

If Yes, provide details: The review would potentially offer opportunities for improved interactions between people from various backgrounds if enrolments for HE in FE and level 4 and 5 increased.

If No, provide reasons

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).

Nothing further

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

The review could potentially have a positive impact by improving the offering for someone with multiple identities.

Part 3. Screening decision

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

The decision is that this is screened out and an equality impact assessment is not needed. One of the recommendations of the review is to develop an advertising campaign. An advertising campaign will promote and raise awareness for all people including all those who fall into S75 groups. A partnership with an expert marketing company will enable the Department to design a campaign that will have the widest reach to as many potential students as possible.

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.

N/A

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.

No, the review should improve the offering at Level 4 and 5, and help promote equality of opportunity for all groups.

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 – Rating (1-3)

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.

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.

The recommendations from the review and public consultation will be used to develop the offering at level 4 and 5 and HE in FE. The TER Division will assess the impact on the S75 groups to ensure there is no detrimental impact. If any of the S75 groups are negatively impacted further investigation will be carried out on the evidence gathered to mitigate.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Alan Thompson
Position/Job Title: DP HEFEWP Branch
Business Area/ Branch: TER Division
Date: 15/11/2022

Approved by: Elaine Dolan
Position/Job Title: Head of HEFEWP Branch
Business Area/Branch: TER Division
Date: 07/12/2022

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.