

DOE SECTION 75 EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY SCREENING ANALYSIS FORM

Section 1

Introduction

This form is intended to help you to consider whether a new policy (either internal or external) or legislation will require a full equality impact assessment (EQIA). Those policies identified as having significant implications for equality of opportunity must be subject to full EQIA.

The form will provide a record of the factors taken into account if a policy is screened out, or excluded for EQIA. It will provide a basis for consultation on the outcome of the screening exercise and will be referenced in the Annual Report to the Equality Commission. Copies of completed forms should be retained on file within business areas (**and a copy sent to the Equality Unit**) and reference should be made to the outcome of the screening exercise and subsequent consultation in any submission made to the Minister.

Background

The Legal Background

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

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

The main groups within each of the nine categories, highlighted above, are identified at Appendix 1.

In addition, without prejudice to its obligations above, the Department is also required, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

Advice on Completion of the Screening Form

It is important that the screening form is completed carefully and thoughtfully. Your Divisional or Agency Equality Officer and the Department's Equality Unit in room 413A Clarence Court (ext 40203/40813) will be happy to assist with all aspects of the screening process and will help with the completion of the form, if required.

Further advice on the screening process can be accessed at Section 4 of the Equality Commission's Guide to the Statutory Duties.

Policies included for EQIA

If, after screening, it is decided that a policy will require a full EQIA, a decision will be required on the priority and timing of the assessment. The screening form should be noted accordingly, signed off and copied to the Equality Unit for inclusion in the EQIA programme.

Policies excluded for EQIA

If a decision is taken to screen out the policy or where there is ambiguity about the equality implication of the proposal, the screening form should be signed off by a senior officer responsible for the policy and a copy sent to the Equality Unit. Copies of all screening out forms will be placed on the Department's website.

Section 2 – Policy to be Screened

Definition of Policy

There have been some difficulties in defining what constitutes a policy in the context of Section 75. To be on the safe side it is recommended that you consider changes to or any new initiatives, proposals, schemes or programmes as policies. The policies covered in the Equality Scheme EQIA programme are a reasonable guide both to the nature of external departmental policies and the level at which they should be considered.

The revised Guidance from The Equality Commission emphasises that the Statutory duties apply to **internal** policies (relating to people who work for the organisation) as well as **external** policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the organisations).

It is important to remember that even if a full EQIA has been carried out in respect of an “overarching” policy or strategy, it will still be necessary for the policy maker to consider if a further EQIA needs to be carried out in respect of those policies cascading from the overarching strategy.

OFMDFM Guidance on Legislative Procedures (Primary and Subordinate) sets out clearly the stages at which equality of opportunity considerations should be taken into consideration in the development of legislation.

Overview of Policy Proposals

The aims and objectives of the policy must be clear and well defined. You must take into account any available data or evidence that will enable you to come to a decision on whether or not a policy may or may not have a differential impact on any of the S75 categories. Evidence may be qualitative and or quantitative and may include research or internal information and or experience in relation to service and customer monitoring exercises. Where appropriate, arrangements should be made to obtain any data necessary to assist screening. The Equality Unit or Central Statistics & Research Branch (Michael Bennett ext 40916) are available to provide advice on data requirements.

2.1 Please insert below a brief description of the policy/legislation, including the title and all the main aims and objectives

Title Amendments to the Planning Fees Regulations

Aims To make changes to planning fees to remove charging anomalies and cross subsidies, to simplify fee categories and to increase revenue to Planning Service which is currently under-recovering against the cost of discharging the planning development management function.

It is essential that all the aims/objectives of the policy be clearly and fully defined.

2.2 On whom will the policies/legislation impact? Please specify

The legislation will impact users of the Northern Ireland planning system who apply for planning permission/consents which are liable for charges under the Fees Regulations

2.3 Who is responsible for (a) devising and (b) delivering the policy, eg is it DOE, a Whitehall Department or EU? What is the relationship and have they considered this issue and any equality issues?

(a) DOE

(b) DOE

2.4 What linkages are there to other NI Departments/NDPBs in relation to this policy/legislation?

Certain government bodies which qualify for a concessionary planning fee at present will have that concession removed as part of this proposal. Those affected are: District Councils; Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Education and Library Boards (this concession applies only to the Education and Library Board controlled schools and not voluntary schools, including integrated schools); Fire Authority for Northern Ireland; Northern Ireland Policing Board (including the PSNI where the land or premises which are the subject of the application are within the ownership of the Policing Board).

2.5 What data are available to facilitate the screening of this policy/ legislation?

The Department set up a team of officials led by Planning Service and with support from Finance and Business Planning, to examine the funding arrangements, and to bring forward proposals for immediate changes to fees with a view to remove charging anomalies and cross subsidies, to simplify fee categories and to increase revenues to improve cost recovery for Planning Service.

2.6 Is additional data required to facilitate screening? If so, give details of how and when it will be obtained.

n/a

See Appendix 4 of the Equality Commission Practical Guidance on EQIA which provides a list of Sources of S75 data or speak to Central Statistics and Research Branch (Michael Bennett, ext 40916) or Equality Unit (Laura McAleese, ext 40203).

Section 3 – Screening Analysis

In cases where there is no available quantitative evidence, you will need to take a pragmatic, common sense judgement as to whether the policy/legislation you are screening may have a particular/differential impact on any of the groups. Discussions with Equality Unit, Statistics Branch and organisations representing the Section 75 Groups will be important and helpful at this stage in obtaining qualitative evidence of impacts. Every effort should be made to ensure that assessments are evidence based.

The following criteria must be considered when screening.

3.1 Is there any indication or evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by the following Section 75 groups?

| | Yes | No |
|--------------------|-----|----|
| Religious belief | | x |
| Political opinion | | x |
| Racial group | | x |
| Age | | x |
| Marital status | | x |
| Sexual orientation | | x |
| Gender | | x |
| Disability | | x |
| Dependants | | x |

Please give details

There is no evidence to suggest that fee levels materially impact the uptake of planning permissions by any Section 75 groups

3.2 Is there any indication or evidence that any of the following Section 75 groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this policy issue?

| | Yes | No |
|--------------------|-----|----|
| Religious belief | | x |
| Political opinion | | x |
| Racial group | | x |
| Age | | x |
| Marital status | | x |
| Sexual orientation | | x |
| Gender | | x |
| Disability | x | |

| | | |
|------------|--|---|
| Dependants | | x |
|------------|--|---|

Please give details

Those with disabilities who make applications are currently exempted from a fee. These proposals will not change that exemption.

3.3 Have consultations with the relevant representative organisations or individuals within any of the Section 75 categories, indicated that policies of this type create problems specific to them?

| | Yes | No |
|--------------------|-----|----|
| Religious belief | | x |
| Political opinion | | x |
| Racial group | | x |
| Age | | x |
| Marital status | | x |
| Sexual orientation | | x |
| Gender | | x |
| Disability | | x |
| Dependants | | X |

Please give details of any consultations carried out, and any problems identified.

Planning Service maintains regular contact with Disability Action, and other groups such as Community Places to monitor and discuss the impact of planning on groups which they represent. No evidence has emerged which would indicate any equality issue.

3.4 Is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or community relations by altering the policy, or by working with others, in Government, or in the larger community in the context of this policy?

Yes No

Please give details

n/a

3.5 It may be that a policy/legislation has a differential impact on a certain Section 75 group, as the policy has been developed to address an existing or historical inequality or disadvantage. If this is the case, please give details below:

n/a

3.6 Please consider if there is any way of adapting the policy to promote better equality of opportunity or good relations.

Please give details
n/a

3.7 In relation to Departmental obligations under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), please consider if there is any way of adapting the policy to show due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and/or encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

Please give details
The existing exemption for disabled applicants remains in place.

Section 4

EQIA Recommendation

You should consider carefully in this section whether full EQIA is necessary, particularly where answers to any questions in Section 3 are affirmative.

- 4.1 Full EQIA procedures should be carried out on policies considered to have significant implications for equality of opportunity. Please fill in the following grid in relation to the policy/legislation.

| Prioritisation Factors | Significant Impact | Moderate Impact | Low Impact |
|--|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Social Need. | | | X |
| Effect on people's daily lives. | | | X |
| Effect on economic, social and human rights. | | | X |
| Strategic significance | | | X |
| Financial significance | | | X |

Please give details

The impact on the disabled has been addressed by making no change to the current exemptions. In positive terms there are economic benefits to applicants for single dwellings by simplification of the charges, and for small industrial applicants whose fees will reduce as part of the proposals.

- 4.2 **In view of the considerations in Section 3 and 4 do you consider that this policy/legislation should be subject to a full EQIA? Please give reasons for your considerations. If you are unsure, please consult with affected groups and revisit the screening analysis accordingly. Yes/No/Unsure**

No

4.3 If an EQIA is considered necessary please comment on the priority and timing in light of the factors in table 4.1.

4.4 If an EQIA is considered necessary is any data required to carry it out/ensure effective monitoring?

Please give details

Section 5

Endorsement

I can confirm that the proposed policy has been screened for equality of opportunity and good relations implications and has been screened out for equality impact assessment/requires a full equality impact assessment.



Signed: _____

Agency/Division: _____

Date: _____ 3 September 2010 _____

PLEASE FORWARD A COPY OF THE COMPLETED FORM TO:

**DOE EQUALITY UNIT
ROOM 413A
CLARENCE COURT
10-18 ADELAIDE STREET
BELFAST
BT2 8GB**

QUERIES TO: **LAURA McALEESE, EXT 40203**
laura.mcaleese@doeni.gov.uk

Section 6

For Completion by Equality Unit

Date

Screening result recorded: _____

Placed on website: _____

Screening out completed: _____

Screening to be reconsidered: _____

Give reasons:

Agency/Division notified date: _____



| Main Groups Relevant to the Section 75 Categories | |
|--|--|
| <u>Category</u> | <u>Main Groups</u> |
| Religious belief | Protestants; Catholics; people of non-Christian faiths; people of no religious belief |
| Political opinion | Unionists generally; Nationalists generally; members/supporters of any political party |
| Racial Group | White people; Chinese; Irish Travellers; Indians; Pakistanis; Bangladeshis; Black Africans; Black Caribbean people; people with mixed ethnic group |
| Gender | Men (including boys); women (including girls); trans-gendered people |
| Marital status | Married people; unmarried people; divorced or separated people; widowed people |
| Age | For most purposes, the main categories are: children under 18, people aged between 18-65, and people over 65. However, the definition of age groups will need to be sensitive to the policy under consideration |
| “Persons with a disability” | Disability is defined as: A physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities as defined in Sections 1 and 2 and Schedules 1 and 2 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 |
| “Persons with dependants” | Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a person with an incapacitating disability; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a dependant elderly person |
| Sexual orientation | Heterosexuals; bi-sexuals; gays; lesbians |