

DoF Screening template

Screening is the first of two methods by which the necessary level of “regard” is demonstrated as being paid to the statutory equality goal, as set out in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The DoF Equality Scheme commits us to screening our policies. This includes our strategies and plans, policies, legislative developments; and new ways of working such as – the introduction, change or end of an existing service, procedure, policy etc.

This screening template is designed to help business areas consider the likely equality and human rights impacts of their proposed decisions on different groups of customers, service users, staff and visitors.

Detailed information about the Section 75 equality duties and what they mean in practice is available on the Equality Commission’s website:
<http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/S75GuideforPublicAuthoritiesApril2010.pdf>

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 accessible on the DoF website as soon as possible following completion and made available in alternative formats on request.

All Section 75 consultees should be advised of the screening exercise once the final policy decision has been taken.

The screening template has 4 sections to complete. These are:

Section A - details about the policy / decision that is being screened.

Section B - 4 key questions that require you to outline the likely impacts on equality groups, and all supporting evidence.

Section C - 4 key questions in relation to obligations under the Disability Discrimination Order and the Human Rights Act.

Section D - the formal record of the screening decision.

SECTION A

Information about the policy

This 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 on a step-by-step basis.

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

Is this a new or revised policy?

Revised

It is an adjustment to member contribution rates in order to meet the required scheme yield which will be effected by a set of Amendment Regulations that amend the provisions of The Public Service (Civil Servants and Others) Pensions Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

a) Name of the policy

Scheme Yield / Member Contributions and The Public Service (Civil Servants and Others) Pensions (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025.

b) Brief Description of the policy

These adjustments and associated regulations will make provision for the member contribution rates from 1 July 2025.

c) Aims of the policy/ Rationale behind the changes

The reformed 2015 Civil Service Pension Scheme (known as alpha) is contributory, and members and their employer are required to pay towards the cost of benefits they build up in the scheme. Members are required collectively to contribute 5.6% across the whole scheme membership. This is known as the member contribution 'scheme yield'. The yield is a fixed percentage, and the Civil Service Pension Scheme shares out the 5.6% requirement across the workforce by charging a sliding scale of rates to members according to their pensionable earnings. The scheme yield of 5.6% is not currently being achieved and an adjustment of the employee percentage contribution rates from 1 July 2025 is required to address the shortfall.

d) Who will the policy affect?

All active members of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Scheme members will be required to pay a minimally increased rate of employee pension contributions with effect from 1 July 2025.

e) Is this a NICS wide policy?

Yes.

f) Who will implement the policy?

The Department of Finance, NICS HR, Pensions Division

g) Will this policy or revision address an existing inequality? No
If yes, please give details.

h) Will this policy or revision benefit any Section 75 categories? No
If yes, please give details.

i) Will this policy or revision have an adverse differential impact upon any of the Section 75 groupings? No. If yes, please give details.

No. Any indirect effects on age or sex have been considered further below in response to the individual screening questions. In each case the Department of Finance considers any indirect impacts for protected characteristics for age and sex to be minor.

Section B

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.

What evidence / information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Set out all evidence below along with details of the different Section 75 groups you have met and / or consulted with to help inform your screening assessment. Please also provide details of priorities and needs identified for each Section 75 group.

- **Religious belief**

There is no data available on the religious belief specific to members of the PCSPS(NI) or to alpha scheme members. However, the most recent [Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service for 2024](#) based on NICS staff in post at 1 January 2024 report the community background composition for the NICS as 50.1% Catholic and 49.9% Protestant. These figures exclude those with a community background recorded as 'Not Determined'.

There is no indication that this policy will disproportionately impact on the basis of religious belief, as these Amendment Regulations will be applied equally to all relevant scheme members.

- **Political opinion**

There is no data available on the political opinion of members of the PCSPS(NI) or alpha scheme members. The NICS does not collect data on the political opinion of staff. However, there is no indication that these Amendment Regulations will disproportionately impact on the basis of political opinion, as they will be applied equally to all relevant scheme members.

- **Racial group**

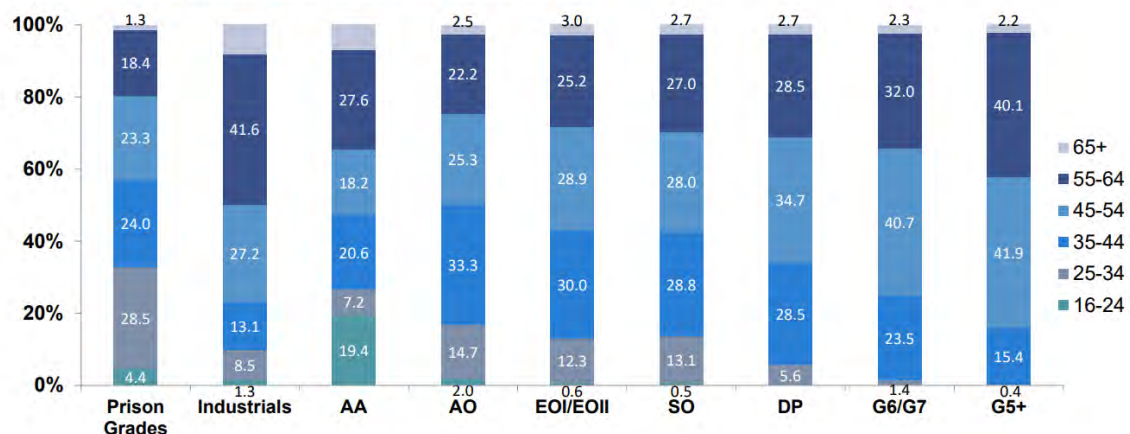
The most recent [NICS Equality Statistics](#) (as at 1 January 2024) show that Ethnicity data are missing for 9.1% of staff. Of staff for whom ethnicity is available, 0.6% were from a minority ethnic group (including members of mixed ethnic groups and the Irish Travelling Community). There is no indication that these Amendment Regulations will disproportionately impact on the basis of racial group, as they will be applied equally to all relevant scheme members.

- **Age**

According to the [Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service for 2024](#), young people (people under the age of 35) are more likely to be represented in the lower paid grades however the impact for this group has been mitigated with a lower contribution increase for the lower paid bands. There is no indication that these Amendment Regulations will disproportionately impact on the basis of age generally, as they will be applied equally to all relevant scheme members.

Composition: Age Group

Figure 7: Age group balance at each analogous grade level¹, 2024



Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

The age profile of the NICS pension scheme membership impacted by the changes (active and partially retired members) as at the 31 March 2024 was:

AGE	ACTIVE	PARTIAL	Grand Total
Under 30	2,385	0	2,385
31 - 40	6,342	0	6,342
41 - 50	9,358	1	9,359
51 - 60	8,546	690	9,236
61 - 70	1,496	1,660	3,156
71 +	47	56	103
Grand Total	28,174	2,407	30,581

Source: NICS Pension Scheme data

- **Marital status**

Data on marital status are missing or unknown for 22.0% of NICS staff. For those staff for whom data are available, 19.5% are recorded as single and 52.7% as married.

The marital composition of the NICS pension scheme membership impacted by the changes (active and partially retired members) as at 31 March 2024 was:

MARITAL STATUS	ACTIVE	PARTIAL	GRAND TOTAL
Single	8,961	276	9,237
Married	13,913	1,720	15,633
Civil Partner	89	2	91
Co-Habiting	243	5	248
Separated	32	9	41
Divorced	804	268	1,072
Ex Married or dissolved Civil Partnership	136	5	141

Widow(er)	65	61	126
Other including unknown	3,931	61	3,992
Grand Total	28,174	2,407	30,581

Source: NICS Pension Scheme data

There is no indication that these Amendment Regulations will disproportionately impact on the basis of marital status, as they will be applied equally to all relevant scheme members.

- **Sexual orientation**

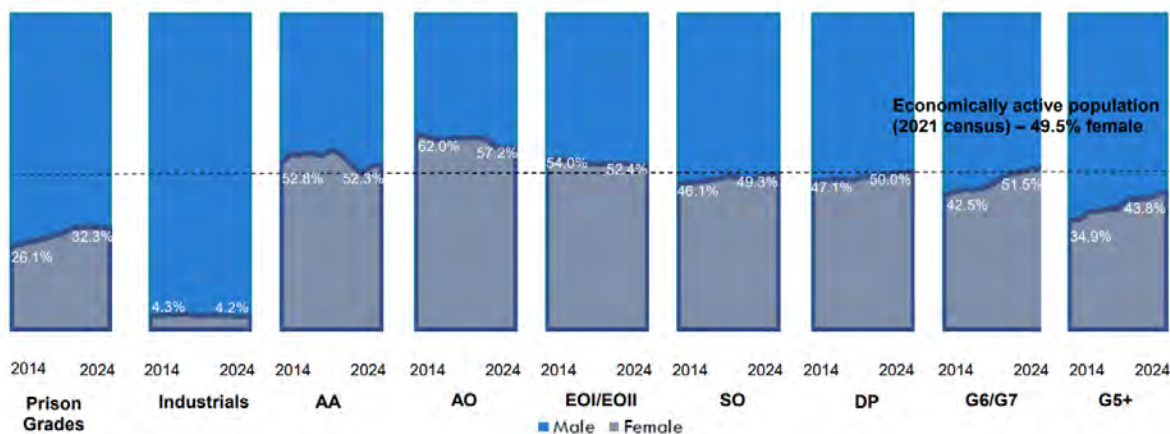
There is no data available on the sexual orientation of scheme members. However, the most recent [Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service for 2024](#) states that sexual orientation data are missing for 66.4% of NICS staff. Of those staff for whom data are available 3.5% described their orientation as towards someone of the same sex, 2.4% towards both sexes and 94.1% towards someone of different sex. However since coverage is limited to a relatively small proportion of staff, staff with a recorded sexual orientation may not be representative of the whole NICS and so it would not be appropriate to use these figures as an estimate of the NICS profile.

- **Men & women generally**

According to the [Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service for 2024](#), there is a greater percentage of females in lower paid grades. The impact of this has been mitigated by a lower contribution increase for the lower paid bands.

Composition: Sex

Figure 2: Sex balance at each analogous grade level¹, 2014 to 2024



Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

The gender composition of the NICS pension scheme membership impacted by the changes (active and partially retired members) as at 31 March 2024 was:

GENDER	ACTIVE	PARTIAL	Grand Total
FEMALE	14,337	1,403	15,740
MALE	13,837	1,004	14,841
Grand Total	28,174	2,407	30,581

Source: NICS Pension Scheme data

Females are more likely to be represented in the lower paid grades however the impact for this group has been mitigated with a lower contribution increase for the lower paid bands. There is no indication that these Amendment Regulations will disproportionately impact on the basis of men and women generally, as they will be applied equally to all relevant scheme members.

- **Disability**

There is no data available on disability of scheme members. However, the most recent [Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service for](#)

[2024](#) states that disability data are missing for 44.5% of staff. Some 6.1% of all staff were recorded as disabled. For the purposes of this report anyone whose disability information is missing (44.5% of staff in 2024) were allocated to the 'No disability declared' category. Potentially, therefore, the true proportion of disabled staff could be as high as 50.6% (on the most extreme scenario where all missing data related to disabled staff). The reported proportion of 6.1% should therefore be considered as a minimum – some staff whose disability information is missing may have a disability, and some others who are recorded as not having a disability may have developed a disability since the information was provided. Both of these scenarios would mean that the proportion all staff having a disability is likely to be higher.

There is no indication that these Amendment Regulations will disproportionately impact on the basis of disability as they will be applied equally to all relevant scheme members.

- **Dependants**

Dependants are not directly impacted by the changes as dependants of active or partially retired members do not pay scheme contributions. Therefore there is no indication that these Amendment Regulations will disproportionately impact on the basis of dependants, as they will be applied equally to all relevant scheme members.

If you have no evidence held, outline how you will obtain it:

Not applicable.

Screening questions

There are 4 essential screening questions:

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

None

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories?

No. The Amendment Regulations do not offer any opportunities in this respect.

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

None, as there is no impact upon such good relations.

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between these three groups?

No, as the draft Amendment Regulations relate to the NICS pension schemes and do not provide any opportunities to better promote good relations between these three groups.

Are there likely impacts on Section 75 Categories?

Religious belief:

None, as the Amendment Regulations will apply equally to all relevant scheme members regardless of religious belief.

- **Political opinion:**

None, as the Amendment Regulations will apply equally to all relevant scheme members regardless of political opinion.

- **Racial group:**

None, as the Amendment Regulations will apply equally to all relevant scheme members regardless of racial group.

- **Age:**

Young people (people under the age of 35) are more likely to be represented in the lower paid grades however the impact for this group has been mitigated with a lower contribution increase for the lower paid bands. The Amendment Regulations will apply equally to all relevant scheme members regardless of age.

- **Marital status:**

None, as the Amendment Regulations will apply equally to all relevant scheme members regardless of marital status.

- **Sexual orientation:**

None, as the Amendment Regulations will apply equally to all relevant scheme members regardless of sexual orientation.

- **Men and women generally:**

Females are more likely to be represented in the lower paid grades however the impact for this group has been mitigated with a lower contribution increase for the lower paid bands. The Amendment Regulations will apply equally to all relevant scheme members regardless of gender.

- **Disability:**

None, as the Amendment Regulations will apply equally to all relevant scheme members regardless of disability.

- **Dependants:**

None, as the Amendment Regulations will apply equally to all relevant scheme members regardless of whether they have a dependant or not.

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).

Young females are more likely to be represented in the lower paid grades however the impact for this group has been mitigated with a lower contribution increase for the lower paid bands.

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

Not applicable.

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.

Alternatively there may already be policies in place which would mitigate any adverse impact identified.

Mitigation measures proposed:

Mitigation to protect those more likely to be represented in the lower paid grades has been included in the proposals in that a lower contribution increase is being proposed for the lower paid bands.

Section C

DoF also has legislative obligations to meet under the [Disability Discrimination Order](#) and the [Human Rights Act](#) . The following questions relate to these two areas.

Consideration of Disability Duties

Does the proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity for DoF to better **promote positive attitudes** towards disabled people?

Explain your assessment in full

Not applicable.

Does the proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity to actively **increase the participation** by disabled people in public life?

Explain your assessment in full

Not applicable.

Consideration of Human Rights

The Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998 brings the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law and it applies in N Ireland. Articles 3 and 4 are classified as “absolute” rights ie the State can never withhold or take away these rights. All others are either “qualified” or “limited”. Further information is available via the following link

<https://nicshumanrightsguide.com/>

Indicate any potential *adverse impacts* that the policy / decision may have in relation to human rights issues.

	<u>Adverse Impact</u>	
	(delete as appropriate)	
Right to Life	Article 2	No
Prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment	Article 3	No
Prohibition of slavery and forced labour	Article 4	No
Right to liberty and security	Article 5	No
Right to a fair and public trial	Article 6	No
Right to no punishment without law	Article 7	No
Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence	Article 8	No
Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Article 9	No
Right to freedom of expression	Article 10	No
Right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association	Article 11	No

Right to marry and to found a family	Article 12	No
The prohibition of discrimination	Article 14	No
Protection of property and enjoyment of possessions	Protocol 1 Article 1	No
Right to education	Protocol 1 Article 2	No
Right to free and secret elections	Protocol 1 Article 3	No

Please indicate any ways which you consider the policy positively promotes human rights.

None. The Amendment Regulations do not provide an opportunity to positively promote human rights.

Please explain any adverse impacts on human rights that you have identified.

None.

If you have identified any adverse impacts on human rights through this screening you must complete a Human Rights Impact Assessment:
<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/human-rights-impact-assessment-proforma>.

Monitoring Arrangements

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's [Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities \(July 2007\)](#):

<http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/S75MonitoringGuidance2007.pdf>

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.

Please detail proposed monitoring arrangements below:

The deficit in the scheme yield has been brought to the attention of Trade Unions representing NICS pension scheme members and has been discussed at Pensions Forum and Scheme Advisory Board meetings. The proposals are subject to a formal consultation exercise. The consultation document will be published alongside this screening document and contains the detail of the increases including impacts on take home pay for affected members. This screening document may be reviewed following the closure of the associated consultation.

Current data as collected and published by the NICS and Civil Service Pensions in compliance with UK GDPR.

Section D - Formal Record of Screening Decision

Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being screened:

Scheme Yield/Member Contributions and associated amendments to The Public Service (Civil Servants and Others) Pensions Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

I can confirm that the proposed policy / decision has been screened for (i) equality of opportunity, (ii) good relations disabilities duties and (iii) human rights issues

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy / decision is –

* **Screened Out** – No EQIA necessary (no impacts)

Provide a brief note to explain how this decision was reached:

There are no unjustified adverse differential impacts for the section 75 groupings.

All members who make contributions to the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Schemes will have the relevant increases applied based on their salary regardless of their section 75 grouping.

Screening assessment completed by -

Name Patrick Donaghey
Grade EO1
Date 21 November 2024

And approved by –

Name Finvola Harkin
Grade G7
Date 22 November 2024

Central Support Team Notified: 18 December 2024

Equality Contacts advised: 20 December 2024

Screening uploaded to DoF website: 13 January 2025