

INTRODUCTORY GUIDANCE TO EQUALITY SCREENING AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

What is it? Equality screening and impact assessment helps us consider the effect of our policies and practices¹ on different people. It helps us minimise negative impact and potential discrimination and promote opportunities to advance equality, inclusion and good relations between different groups of people.

There are two main elements to equality screening and impact assessment. Firstly a set of equality screening questions are reviewed. These questions help determine whether the policy is relevant to equality and whether it needs to go through an equality impact assessment. The second element, if required, is the equality impact assessment meeting. This is where a panel of people review the proposed policy, particularly thinking about its impact on different groups of people, trying to identify and counter any potential negative impact and promote any opportunities to enhance equality. The panel suggests actions for the policy owner to adopt.

Why do we do it? The process helps us improve our policies and build equality into our work. Equality screening and impact assessment helps us consider the potential impact of what we do on different groups who are susceptible to unjustified discrimination, some of whom are legally protected against this, whether by UK or other law. It helps us demonstrate that we have proactively considered equality when developing our policies.

When should we do it? Assessing the impact on equality should start early in the policy development process, or at the early stage of a review. Assessing the impact on equality should be ongoing rather than a one-off exercise, because circumstances change over time, so equality considerations should be taken into account both as the policy is developed and also as it is implemented. The guidance here is to help assess the impact on equality before the policy is implemented.

It takes some time to properly set up an equality impact assessment meeting if one is needed, so the equality screening questions should be considered as early as possible once the policy is drafted. If an equality impact assessment is required it will take a little time to identify a chair, a note-taker, a diverse panel and to set up the meeting arrangements. In addition once the meeting has taken place there are likely to be actions to be implemented before the policy is launched. All this needs to be considered when determining the best time to address equality screening and impact assessment.

When we are implementing a policy that has been developed elsewhere, for example by a government department, or by a partner organisation we also need to assess the impact on equality. Although responsibility for the policy itself rests with the organisation that developed it, we may have choices in how it is implemented that can help eliminate potential discrimination and promote equality, inclusion and good relations.

How do we do it? Consider the purpose of the policy, the context in which it will operate, who it should benefit and what results are intended from it. Reflect on its potential impact on people with different equality categories and think about which aspects of the policy, if any,

¹ Consistent with its broad definition in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and other equality legislation, this guidance uses the term 'policy' as a shorthand for policies, practices, activities and significant decisions about how we work and carry out our functions.

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are most relevant to equality. Answer the equality screening questions to determine whether an equality impact assessment meeting is necessary.

Identify someone to chair the equality impact assessment panel meeting, if one is necessary, and someone to take the notes. The chair and note-taker play a crucial role and specific guidance has been developed to support them ([guidance for Chairs](#); [guidance for Note-takers](#)). A diverse panel should be approached, including a range of colleagues from different teams/departments/countries/regions as appropriate, some of whom should be directly involved in or impacted by the policy. Panel members should be sent the part-completed ESIA form and the policy documents, giving them at least a full week to read them and prepare for the meeting.

We particularly focus on the following equality categories (many of which are protected by equality legislation in the UK and beyond): age, dependant responsibilities (with or without), disability, gender including transgender, marital status/civil partnership, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Invariably there are other areas to consider including full-time/part-time working, geographical location, tribe/caste/clan or language, dependent on the country. We also review what is being proposed against the organisation's values (creativity, integrity, mutuality, professionalism and valuing people).

After the meeting the action points identified by the panel are reviewed by the policy owner and implemented as appropriate. The policy owner confirms implementation of the action points (and outlines a justification for any action points that won't be taken forward) and then signs off and sends the completed form to ESIA@britishcouncil.org.

Northern Ireland

There is particular legislation in Northern Ireland which requires a more detailed process of equality screening and impact assessment for policies that are deemed to have high relevance to equality. This includes external consultation with relevant contacts and organisations. Given this, there is a need to confirm whether the proposed policy affects anyone in Northern Ireland. **If it does, all parts of the form need to be completed and the guidance at Annex A must be read and followed.**

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EQUALITY SCREENING

POLICY² DETAILS – *Please complete*

Title of policy	UK Maternity Policy / Maternity Rights Booklet
Name of policy owner	Nasima Begum
Intended implementation date	April 2019

BACKGROUND - *Provide brief background information about the policy, or change to it. Include rationale, intended beneficiaries and expected outcomes. (Use as much space as you wish, the text box below will expand as you enter information).*

The UK Maternity Leave Policy provides a summary of the maternity leave entitlements that UK-appointed and UK-appointed overseas employees are entitled to. The policy was last updated in 2012 and therefore, on behalf of the Employee Relations and Reward team, I have been updating the policy to ensure: it is legally compliant; the URL links were working and the contact information was updated. This policy continues to apply to all pregnant employees that are UK-appointed and UK-appointed overseas in the same way.

The maternity policy is specifically for employees who are planning to have a baby or for employees who are pregnant. The British Council's contractual maternity leave offers enhanced maternity provisions in comparison to UK statutory requirements. Having reviewed the equality categories/protected characteristics, there are no equality groups that are impacted differently by this policy. Whilst the policy impacts employees in Northern Ireland, the legislative updates impact employees in Northern Ireland in the same way as the UK. This was verified by the ED&I Manager for Northern Ireland as part of this ESIA self-assessment, of which would not require an ESIA.

IS AN EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?

To determine this, please answer the following by ticking yes, no or not sure:

Question	Yes	No	Not sure
Is the policy potentially significant in terms of its anticipated impact on employees, or customers/clients/audiences, or the wider community?		X	
Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how programmes/services/functions are delivered?		X	
Might the policy affect people in particular equality categories in a different way?		X	

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Are the potential equality impacts unknown?		X	
Does the policy have the possibility to support or detract from our efforts to promote the inclusion of people from under-represented groups?		X	
Will the policy have an impact on anyone in Northern Ireland?	X		
Total responses Yes/No/Not sure	1	5	

DECIDING IF AN EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT IS NECESSARY

If all the answers to the questions above are 'no' then an equality impact assessment is not needed.

*Please move to the **'Record of decision'** section below.*

If there are any 'yes' responses then an equality impact assessment is necessary.

*Please move to the **'Record of decision'** section below.*

If there are no 'yes' responses but there are any 'not sure' responses then please discuss next steps further with the Regional Diversity Lead or with the Diversity Unit, who will help you decide if an equality impact assessment is necessary. Examples of situations where it is not necessary to carry out an equality impact assessment include:

- Producing a team newsletter
- Changing the time of a meeting
- Planning an internal event

In these instances relevant equality issues should still be considered, but there is no need to carry out an equality impact assessment.

RECORD OF DECISION

I confirm an equality impact assessment is not required.

Policy Owner: Nasima Begum, Employee Relations Advisor

Date: 01/04/2019

Note 1: *If an equality impact assessment **is required**, please complete questions 1-3 in the following section and send this part-completed form to the panel along with any relevant background documentation about the policy at least one full week prior to the EIA meeting. This should include the draft policy and any supporting data or relevant papers.*

Note 2: *If an equality impact assessment **is not required**, please send this screening section of the form to ESIA@britishcouncil.org.*