



PUBLIC PROSECUTION SERVICE

POLICY FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Section 75

EQUALITY SCREENING FORM

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PPS POLICY EQUALITY SCREENING FORM

The Legal Background

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

- between person 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 without¹.

Without prejudice to the obligations set out above, the PPS is also required to:

- **have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group; and**
- **meet legislative obligations under the Disability Discrimination Order and the Human Rights Act.**

Introduction

1. This form should be read in conjunction with the Equality Commission's revised Section 75, "A Guide for Public Authorities" April 2010 and available via the following link [S75 Guide for Public Authorities April 2010](#). **Staff should complete a form for each new or revised policy for which they are responsible (see page 6 for a definition of policy in respect of section 75).**
2. The purpose of screening is to identify those policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations, and will help improve the organisation's service provision through a systematic review of all services, policies, procedures, practices and/or decisions. It will also help determine whether an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is necessary.

¹A list of the main groups identified as being relevant to each of the section 75 categories is at Annex A of the document.

Screening should be introduced at an early stage when developing or reviewing a policy.

3. The lead role in the screening of a policy should be taken by the policy decision-maker who has the authority to make changes to that policy and should involve, in the screening process:
 - other relevant team members;
 - those who implement the policy;
 - staff members from other relevant work areas; and
 - key stakeholders.
4. The first step in the screening exercise, is to gather evidence and relevant data to inform the screening decisions. Relevant data may be either quantitative or qualitative or both (this helps to indicate whether or not there are likely equality of opportunity and/or good relations impacts associated with a policy). Relevant information will help to clearly demonstrate the reasons for a policy being either 'screened in' for an equality impact assessment or 'screened out' from an equality impact assessment.
5. Screening provides an assessment of the likely impact, whether 'minor' or 'major', of its policy on equality of opportunity and/or good relations for the relevant categories. In some instances, screening may identify the likely impact is none.
6. The absence of evidence does not indicate that there is no likely impact but if none is available, it may be appropriate to consider subjecting the policy to an EQIA.
7. The Equality Commission has developed a series of four questions, included in Part 3 of this screening form with supporting sub-questions, which should be applied to all policies as part of the screening process.

The questions should assist in identifying those policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Screening decisions

8. Completion of screening should lead to one of the following three outcomes. The policy has been:
 - i. 'screened in' for equality impact assessment;
 - ii. 'screened out' with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted; or
 - iii. 'screened out' without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

Screening and good relations duty

9. The Equality Commission recommends that a policy is 'screened in' for equality impact assessment if the likely impact on **good relations** is 'major'. While there is no legislative requirement to engage in an equality impact assessment in respect of good relations, this does not necessarily mean that equality impact assessments are inappropriate in this context.

Staff should complete a form for each of new or revised policy for which they are responsible (see page 6 for a definition of policy in respect of section 75).

If you have any questions regarding the screening exercise or S75 in general please contact the Equality Officer in Central Management Unit at the address given below.

Part 1

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 any new initiatives, proposals, schemes or programmes as policies or changes to those already in existence. It is important to remember that even if a full EQIA has been carried out in an “overarching” policy or strategy, it will still be necessary for the policy maker to consider if further screening or an EQIA needs to be carried out in respect of those policies cascading from the overarching strategy.

Overview of Policy Proposals

The aims and objectives of the policy must be clear and terms of reference well defined. You must take into account any available data 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.

Policy Scoping

10. 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.
11. 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
Making a Complaint about the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland
Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?
This is a <u>revised</u> policy which has been developed following an internal review of complaint procedures, building on recommendations made by the Independent Assessor of Complaints for the PPS in his 2013/14 Annual Report. It is based in large part on the previous version of the guidance, published in 2012. Amendments to the guidance are relatively minor and the overall three tier framework for the handling of complaints is unchanged.
What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes)
The purpose of this policy is to set out the arrangements and procedures which the PPS will follow in responding to complaints from members of the public regarding the standard of service provided.
Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy? If so, explain how.
All Section 75 categories are expected to benefit from the changes to this policy. The PPS has provided a broad range of methods by which a complaint can be made, including telephone, email, letter or in person. There is also a new 'web form' for submission of complaints, while complainants who are deaf/hard of hearing will have access to a SMS text facility. As outlined in the previous guidance, complaints may also be made by a representative of the complainant (e.g. a family member). Information on how to make a complaint will continue to be available in a range of alternative formats.
Who initiated or wrote the policy?
The PPS Head of Central Management Unit is responsible for developing this policy.
Who owns and who implements the policy?
Central Management Unit

Implementation factors

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

If yes, are they

- financial
- legislative
- other, please specify _____

Main stakeholders affected

13. Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

- staff
- service users
- other public sector organisations
- voluntary/community/trade unions
- other, please specify _____

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- PPS Code for Prosecutors and Code of Ethics
- NICS Code of Ethics
- External Communication Strategy
- Internal Communication Strategy
- The Independent Assessor of Complaints for the Public Prosecution Service (Guidance)
- PPS Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures
- Community Outreach Policy
- PPS Equality Scheme
- PPS Disability Action Plan

Available evidence

14. Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data.
15. What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Section 75 Category	Details of evidence/information
Religious belief	N/A
Political opinion	N/A
Racial group	<p>In the past it may have been difficult for certain groups for whom English is not their first language to understand who to contact and all the steps involved in making a complaint due to the fact that suitable alternative formats of the original complaints guidance (2007) were not available. Alternative formats of this latest guidance can be made available on request.</p> <p>Telephone complaints will now be dealt with by the new Victim and Witness Care Unit in the PPS's Belfast and Foyle offices. Members of the VWCU team have received specific training in terms of assisting service users from a wide variety of backgrounds. This should result in an improved service to the public.</p> <p>In addition the Service has widened the methods by which complaints can now be made i.e. web form</p>

	and SMS.
Age	<p>Younger or older people may have had difficulties in the past understanding the processes involved or the format was unsuitable to meet their needs. Alternative formats of the guidance are available to explain the complaints process.</p> <p>Telephone complaints will now be dealt with by the new Victim and Witness Care Unit in the PPS's Belfast and Foyle offices. Members of the VWCU team have received specific training in terms of assisting service users from a wide variety of backgrounds. This should result in an improved service to the public.</p> <p>In addition the Service has widened the methods by which complaints can now be made i.e. web form and SMS.</p>
Marital status	N/A
Sexual orientation	N/A
Men and Women generally	N/A
Disability	<p>People with a disability e.g. those with sensory disabilities may have had difficulty in understanding all the steps involved in making a complaint due to the fact that suitable alternative formats of the original guidance were not available. Alternative formats of the latest guidance can be made available on request to explain the process.</p> <p>Telephone complaints will now be dealt with by the new Victim and Witness Care Unit in the PPS's</p>

	<p>Belfast and Foyle offices. Members of the VWCU team have received specific training in terms of assisting service users from a wide variety of backgrounds. This should result in an improved service to the public.</p> <p>In addition the Service has widened the methods by which complaints can now be made i.e. web form and SMS.</p>
<p>Dependants</p>	<p>People with dependants, who may have difficulties if they wish to make a complaint in person, can do so at their local PPS office.</p>

Needs, experiences and priorities

16. 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 for each of the Section 75 categories.

Section 75 Category	Details of evidence/information
Religious belief	N/A
Political opinion	N/A
Racial group	Improved ease of access should improve the process for those who do not have English as their first language. This is evidenced by access to alternative formats, the wider methods by which complaints can now be made e.g. telephone, letter, e-mail, web form, SMS etc, and the facility to make a complaint through nominated individuals (e.g. a family member). Complaints may still be made in person at one of the six regional offices.
Age	Improved ease of access for those younger or older people who may have had difficulties in the past. This is evidenced by access to alternative formats, the wider methods by which complaints can now be made e.g. telephone, letter, e-mail, web form, SMS etc, and the facility to make a complaint through nominated individuals (e.g. a family member). Complaints may still be made in person at one of the six regional offices.
Marital status	N/A

Sexual orientation	N/A
Men and Women generally	N/A
Disability	Improved ease of access for people with a disability e.g. those with sensory disabilities. This is evidenced by access to alternative formats, the wider methods by which complaints can now be made e.g. letter, e-mail, web form, SMS etc, and the facility to make a complaint through nominated individuals (e.g. a family member). Complaints may still be made in person at one of the six regional offices.
Dependants	Improved ease of access for people with dependants. This is evidenced by access by the wider methods by which complaints can now be made e.g. telephone, letter, e-mail, web form etc, and the facility to make a complaint through nominated individuals (e.g. a family member). Complaints may still be made in person at one of the six regional offices.

Section 75 monitoring of the complaints process (introduced in 2012/13), by way of a follow-up questionnaire will continue to assist the PPS in identifying any unintentional adverse impact on any Section 75 group and ensure that the PPS delivers a better service.

Part 2(a)

17. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Articles as identified by European Convention of Human Rights.

- Article 2 - Right to life
- Article 3 - Prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment
- Article 4 - Prohibition of slavery and forced labour
- Article 5 - Right to liberty and security
- Article 6 - Right to fair and public trial
- Article 7 - Right to no punishment with law
- Article 8 - Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence
- Article 9 - Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Article 10 - Right to freedom of expression
- Article 11 - Rights to freedom of assembly and association
- Article 12 – Right to marry and to found a family
- Article 14 – The prohibition of discrimination
- Protocol 1 Article 1 – Protection of Property
- Protocol 1 Article 2 - Right to education

Definitions of degree of risk of infringement of each article:

High risk – It is foreseeable that this policy is very likely to breach this Article.

Medium risk – This policy is likely, in certain circumstances, to breach this Article.

Low risk – It is possible, though very unlikely, that this policy will breach this Article.

18. Indicate any potential Human Rights implications associated with this policy, the perceived degree of risk (see above) and who the victim may be.

	Has this policy the potential to infringe the rights (Please Tick)		If yes indicate here the degree of risk – High, Medium or Low (See definitions above)	If yes indicate here who the potential victim(s) would be
	Yes	No		
Article 2		√		
Article 3		√		
Article 5		√		
Article 6		√		
Article 8		√		
Article 9		√		

Article 10		√		
Article 11		√		
Article 12		√		
Article 14*		√		
Article 1 of Protocol 1		√		
Article 2 of Protocol 1		√		

19. Outline any justification for any infringements identified:

20. Are any alternatives available which may not infringe Human Rights?

Yes

No

If yes, and the decision has been taken NOT to pursue the alternatives, please give a rationale for this decision.

21. Outline any action which could be taken to reduce the level of infringement.

22. Are there actions that can be taken that would promote human rights?

Yes

No

Please specify:

Part 2(b)

OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ORDER

Under section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, public authorities, when carrying out their functions must have due regard to the need to:

- **promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and**
- **encourage participation by disabled people in public life.**

Questions 5 and 6 below relate to these two areas.

Consideration of Disability Duties

23. Does this proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity for PPS to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

Explain your assessment in full

The changes made to the complaints procedure (both in 2012 and 2014) aim to remove barriers that may exist for service users in making a complaint when they are dissatisfied with some aspect of their service. This should encourage people with disabilities to come forward with their complaints and have these dealt with appropriately by the PPS where they may have felt unable to do so in the past.

24. Does this proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity for PPS to actively increase the participation by disabled people in public life?

Explain your assessment in full

As outlined above, the revised policy should encourage people with disabilities to come forward and allow their complaints to be investigated.

Part 3

SCREENING QUESTIONS

Introduction

25. In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, consider questions 1-4 listed below.
26. If the conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the decision maybe to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, give details of the reasons for the decision taken.
27. If the 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.
28. If the 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:
- introduce measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
 - the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Factors that would indicate a conclusion in favour of a 'major' impact

29. (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.

Factors that would indicate a conclusion in favour of ‘minor’ impact

30. (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.

Factors that would indicate a conclusion in favour of none

31. (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.
32. 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

<p>1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? Minor/Major/None</p>		
Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? Minor/Major/None
Religious belief		None
Political opinion		None
Racial group	For certain groups for whom English is not their first language there are wider methods by which complaints can now be made e.g. telephone, letter, e-mail, web form, SMS etc	Minor (Positive)
Age	For those younger or older people who may have had difficulties in the past there are wider methods by which complaints can now be made e.g. telephone, letter, e-mail, web form, SMS etc	Minor (Positive)
Marital status		None
Sexual orientation		None
Men and Women generally		None
Disability	For those people with a disability there are wider methods by which	Minor (Positive)

	complaints can now be made e.g. telephone, letter, e-mail, web form, SMS etc	
Dependants		None

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

Section 75 category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief	N/A	
Political opinion	N/A	
Racial group	Improved ease of access should improve the process for those who do not have English as their first language.	
Age	Improved ease of access for those younger or older people who may have had difficulties in the past.	
Marital status	N/A	
Sexual orientation	N/A	
Men and Women generally	N/A	
Disability	Improved ease of access for people with a disability e.g. those with sensory disabilities.	
Dependants	Improved ease of access for people with dependants.	

<p>3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? Minor/Major/None</p>		
Good relations category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact Minor/Major/None
Religious belief		None
Political opinion		None
Racial group		None

<p>4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?</p>		
Good relations category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief		Policy applies equally to all S 75 categories.
Political opinion		
Racial group		

Additional considerations

Multiple Identity

33. 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).

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

Part 4

Screening decision

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

There are no procedures outlined within the policy which are likely to have an adverse impact on any S75 category, instead individuals, in particular younger or older people, persons with a disability, and groups for whom English is not their first language, are expected to benefit from the changes.

36. If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced.

Due to the positive impacts the policy does not require an EQIA / or any mitigating changes.

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

Not applicable.

38. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

Mitigation

39. 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.
40. Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?
41. If so, give the **reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

Not Applicable

Timetabling and prioritising

42. Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.
43. 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.
44. 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	

45. 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.
46. Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?
47. If yes, please provide details.

Part 5

Monitoring

48. Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).
49. 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).
50. 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 6

Approval and authorisation

Screened by:	Position/Job Title	Date
	Deputy Principal, Central Management Unit	31/07/14
	Staff Officer, Central Management Unit	
Approved by:		
	Head of Central Management Unit	01/08/14
I am satisfied that this policy has been properly screened for both equality impact and human rights infringement, and I agree with the screening decision made. Authorised by: (Head of Division)		
	Senior Assistant Director, Resources and Change	06/08/14

Note: A copy of the Screening Template should be made easily accessible on the public authority's website as soon as possible following completion. This will be undertaken by the Equality Officer on receipt as per below. Hard copies should also be made available on request.

The screening exercise is now complete.

When you have completed the form please retain a record in your branch and send a signed copy for information to:

Equality and Governance Officer
10th Floor
Linum Chambers

2 Bedford Square

Bedford Street

BT2 7ES

 44870

and e-mail an electronic version to anna.scott@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk.

If any EQIA **is** required, the Equality Officer should be contacted for further advice if necessary.

Further information on equality, including a copy of the PPS Equality Scheme, yearly progress reports on equality to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, information on data sources and other useful links may be found on the PPS Intranet under the Equality Scheme section.

**MAIN GROUPS IDENTIFIED AS RELEVANT TO THE SECTION 75
CATEGORIES**

Category	Main Groups
Religious belief	Protestants; Catholics; people of other religious belief; 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; Afro Caribbean people; people of mixed ethnic group, other groups
Men and Women generally	Men (including boys); women (including girls); trans-gender and trans-sexual people
Marital/Civil Partnership status	Married people; unmarried people; divorced or separated people; widowed people; civil partnerships
Age	For most purposes, the main categories are: children under 18; people aged between 18 and 65. However the definition of age groups will need to be sensitive to the policy under consideration. For example, for some employment policies, children under 16 could be distinguished from people of working age
Persons with a disability and persons without	Persons with a physical, sensory or learning disability as defined in Schedules 1 and 2 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
Persons with dependants and persons without	Persons with primary responsibility for the care of a child; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a person with a disability; persons with primary responsibility for a dependent elderly person.
Sexual orientation	Heterosexuals; bisexual people; gay men; lesbians