



Section 75 Screening Form

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

REVIEW OF DESIGN STANDARDS FOR NEW BUILD SOCIAL HOUSING IN THE SOCIAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

Existing/~~Revised~~/~~New~~ (delete as applicable)

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

Social Housing is delivered through the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) in a tri-partite arrangement between the Department for Communities (DfC), the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and Registered Housing Associations (RHAs). The Department sets the policy and budget with NIHE responsible for the Programme. Responsibility for the actual development of social housing rests with RHAs.

DfC allocates the vast majority of its capital budget to the delivery of new social homes, and it must ensure that the amount allocated delivers optimum value for money. The funding available has become severely constrained in recent years thus reducing the number of new build starts possible each year. A continued failure to meet new build targets will only compound the levels of housing need in future years. The social housing waiting list stands at over 49,000 households, including over 38,000 experiencing housing stress. The numbers are on the rise, indicating a pressing need for action to uphold the basic right to a good home.

Anecdotally RHAs have expressed concern that costs associated with some Housing Association Guide – Design Guide requirements have been excessive and impact on the cost of providing social homes.

The purpose of this review is to consider if there can be a more flexible approach applied to the Design Guide to address RHAs concerns without compromising on quality/ outcomes, and to ensure that DfC continues to get value for money in social housing delivery. The review will:

- consider current best practice in terms of housing standards in the UK and Ireland.
- critically review the current Housing Association Guide’s Design Guide to ensure that, amongst other things, standards are up to date, fit for purpose, readily achievable, delivering value for money and providing tangible benefits to both tenants and RHAs.
- assess potential options for the future of the Housing Association Guide’s Design Guide standards to determine, amongst other things, whether alternative approaches to the design and specification of new social housing will increase housing supply.
- recommend if, and how, the Housing Association Guide’s Design Guide standards should be amended to best achieve DfCs goals, with regards to increased supply and sustainability over the whole-life cycle of the homes.

A Final Report, setting out the associated recommendations with a proposed implementation plan, is expected by early Autumn 2026.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?

Yes/No/NA (delete as applicable)

If Yes, explain how.

There may be benefits to all S75 categories, if the Review reduces costs and provides additional homes

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

Department for Communities

Who owns and who implements the policy?

Department for Communities; NI Housing Executive

Implementation factors

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 _The outcomes of the review may not be accepted by RHAs, which could limit implementation

Main stakeholders affected

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 Registered Housing Associations

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they and who owns them?

Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-2027 – ‘Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing’ (NI Executive)

Housing Supply Strategy (2024 -2039) – ‘Objective 1: Creating Affordable Options,’ to ‘Increase housing supply and affordable options across all tenures to meet housing need and demand.’ (Department for Communities)

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? Specify details for **each** of the Section 75 categories.

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information
All	<p data-bbox="407 688 1370 814"><u>DfC considers this policy to be technical in nature and as such, there is no relevant evidence or information available to inform parts of this screening.</u></p> <ul data-bbox="456 863 1370 1929" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="456 863 1370 1115">• NI Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA) reported that at quarter ending 31 December 2025, the total number of applicants on the NIHE waiting list (with no existing NIHE/ RHA tenancy) was 49,755. Of these applicants, 38,620 households were in housing stress.<li data-bbox="456 1163 1370 1457">• The aim of the DfC Housing Supply Strategy, which is a 15-year strategy covering the period 2024-2039, is to create a housing system that can deliver on housing needs and demands. This includes an ambition to deliver at least 100,000 homes and more, if needed, with one third of these being social homes.<li data-bbox="456 1505 1370 1673">• The Programme for Government 2024-2027 target is that by the end of this mandate in 2027, work will have started on at least 5,850 new build social homes.<li data-bbox="456 1722 1370 1929">• NISRA reported that, at quarter ending 31 March 2024, there were 1,106 Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) new social housing dwelling starts and 603 SHDP new social housing dwelling completions. At quarter ending 31

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	<p>March 2025 there were 1,275 Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) new social housing dwelling starts and 667 SHDP new social housing dwelling completions.</p> <p>The DfC Minister chaired a Housing Roundtable meeting in January 2025 which brought together key stakeholders to share knowledge and experience on how to increase social housing provision in the current challenging environment. One of the outcomes identified was to consider if a more flexible approach could be applied to the Design Guide to provide RHAs with more freedom without compromising on quality/ outcomes. RHAs have expressed concern that costs associated with some Secured by Design and Lifetime Homes requirements have been excessive and impact on the cost of providing social homes.</p> <p>In October 2025 the Minister announced that a fundamental system review of design standards should be taken forward to ensure that DfC continues to get value for money in social housing delivery.</p>																																																															
Religious belief	<p>No. of applicant households on the Social Housing Waiting List as at 31/12/2025 at N. Ireland Level by Religion & Housing Stress</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="407 1409 1318 1797"> <thead> <tr> <th>Religion</th> <th>0 - 29 Pts</th> <th>%</th> <th>30+ Pts = Housing Stress</th> <th>%</th> <th>Total</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Catholic</td> <td>3,975</td> <td>35.7%</td> <td>15,193</td> <td>39.3%</td> <td>19,168</td> <td>38.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Protestant</td> <td>2,858</td> <td>25.7%</td> <td>8,617</td> <td>22.3%</td> <td>11,475</td> <td>23.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mixed</td> <td>107</td> <td>1.0%</td> <td>280</td> <td>0.7%</td> <td>387</td> <td>0.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>None</td> <td>1,575</td> <td>14.1%</td> <td>4,497</td> <td>11.6%</td> <td>6,072</td> <td>12.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>600</td> <td>5.4%</td> <td>2,837</td> <td>7.3%</td> <td>3,437</td> <td>6.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Refused</td> <td>74</td> <td>0.7%</td> <td>250</td> <td>0.6%</td> <td>324</td> <td>0.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unknown</td> <td>1,946</td> <td>17.5%</td> <td>6,946</td> <td>18.0%</td> <td>8,892</td> <td>17.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>N. Ireland Total</td> <td>11,135</td> <td>100.0%</td> <td>38,620</td> <td>100.0%</td> <td>49,755</td> <td>100.0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Religion	0 - 29 Pts	%	30+ Pts = Housing Stress	%	Total	%	Catholic	3,975	35.7%	15,193	39.3%	19,168	38.5%	Protestant	2,858	25.7%	8,617	22.3%	11,475	23.1%	Mixed	107	1.0%	280	0.7%	387	0.8%	None	1,575	14.1%	4,497	11.6%	6,072	12.2%	Other	600	5.4%	2,837	7.3%	3,437	6.9%	Refused	74	0.7%	250	0.6%	324	0.7%	Unknown	1,946	17.5%	6,946	18.0%	8,892	17.9%	N. Ireland Total	11,135	100.0%	38,620	100.0%	49,755	100.0%
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	Divorced	461	4.1%	894	2.3%	1,355	2.7%																												
	Civil Partnership (CP)	≤10	<0.1%	20	0.1%	20*	<0.1%																												
	CP Surviving Partner	-	-	-	-	-	-																												
	Married	906	8.1%	2,666	6.9%	3,572	7.2%																												
	Widow/Widower	208	1.9%	546	1.4%	754	1.5%																												
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	Separated	537	4.8%	1,704	4.4%	2,241	4.5%																												
	Co-Habitee	221	2.0%	591	1.5%	812	1.6%																												
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Sexual orientation	Not known																																		
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Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information						
Disability	No. of applicant households on the Social Housing Waiting List as at 31/12/2025 at N. Ireland Level by Applicants With & Without someone in the Household who Requires Ground Floor Accommodation & Housing Stress						
	Ground Floor Accommodation Required Y/N	0 - 29 Pts	%	30+ Pts = Housing Stress	%	Total	%
	N	10,004	89.8%	31,164	80.7%	41,168	82.7%
	Y	1,131	10.2%	7,456	19.3%	8,587	17.3%
	N. Ireland Total	11,135	100.0%	38,620	100.0%	49,755	100.0%
Dependants	No. of applicant households on the Social Housing Waiting List as at 31/12/2025 at N. Ireland Level by Applicants With & Without Dependent Children & Housing Stress						
	Dependent Children Y/N	0 - 29 Pts	%	30+ Pts = Housing Stress	%	Total	%
	N	7,785	69.9%	25,265	65.4%	33,050	66.4%
	Y	3,350	30.1%	13,355	34.6%	16,705	33.6%
	N. Ireland Total	11,135	100.0%	38,620	100.0%	49,755	100.0%

Source: NIHE Waiting List data at 31 December 2025

Note to reader - If you are aware of and would like the Department to take into account any further evidence or information relevant to this policy, please send this to InfoHI@communities-ni.gov.uk

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 for **each** of the Section 75 categories

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious belief	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this Section 75 group in relation to this policy.
Political opinion	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this Section 75 group in relation to this policy.
Racial group	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this Section 75 group in relation to this policy.
Age	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this Section 75 group in relation to this policy.
Marital status	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this Section 75 group in relation to this policy.
Sexual orientation	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this Section 75 group in relation to this policy.
Men and women generally	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this Section 75 group in relation to this policy.
Disability	People with disabilities, including wheelchair users, may need homes that, for example, allow sufficient circulation space to

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
	enable convenient movement, to make daily activities easier and safer so tenants can live independently.
Dependants	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this Section 75 group in relation to this policy.

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 questions 1-4 which are given on pages 66-68 of this Guide.

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? minor/major/none

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
All	If the outcome of this Review recommends a change to Design Standards, bringing with it a reduction in costs, it has the potential to increase the number of new homes provided, which will have a positive impact for those on the waiting list regardless of Section 75 category	None
Religious belief	We do not expect there to be any adverse impacts on equality of opportunity for people within this group.	None
Political opinion	We do not expect there to be any adverse impacts on equality of opportunity for people within this group.	None
Racial group	We do not expect there to be any adverse impacts on equality of opportunity for people within this group.	None
Age	We do not expect there to be any adverse impacts on equality of	None

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
	opportunity for people within this group.	
Marital status	We do not expect there to be any adverse impacts on equality of opportunity for people within this group.	None
Sexual orientation	We do not expect there to be any adverse impacts on equality of opportunity for people within this group.	None
Men and women generally	We do not expect there to be any adverse impacts on equality of opportunity for people within this group.	None
Disability	Whilst it is acknowledged that people with a disability have particular needs, we do not expect there to be any adverse impacts on equality of opportunity for people within this group.	
Dependants	We do not expect there to be any adverse impacts on equality of opportunity for people within this group.	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		<p>The Housing Association Guide - Design Guide requirements are the standard that all social housing provision is required to meet. The policy objective is to review the Design Guide to consider if there can be a more flexible approach to provide RHAs more freedom without compromising on quality/ outcomes, and to ensure that DfC continues to get value for money in social housing delivery. There are no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity.</p>
Political opinion		<p>The Housing Association Guide - Design Guide requirements are the standard that all social housing provision is required to meet. The policy objective is to review the Design Guide to consider if there can be a more flexible approach to provide RHAs more freedom</p>

Section 75 category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
		without compromising on quality/ outcomes, and to ensure that DfC continues to get value for money in social housing delivery. There are no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity.
Racial group		The Housing Association Guide - Design Guide requirements are the standard that all social housing provision is required to meet. The policy objective is to review the Design Guide to consider if there can be a more flexible approach to provide RHAs more freedom without compromising on quality/ outcomes, and to ensure that DfC continues to get value for money in social housing delivery. There are no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity.
Age		The Housing Association Guide - Design Guide requirements are the standard that all social housing provision is

Section 75 category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
		<p>required to meet. The policy objective is to review the Design Guide to consider if there can be a more flexible approach to provide RHAs more freedom without compromising on quality/ outcomes, and to ensure that DfC continues to get value for money in social housing delivery. There are no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity.</p>
Marital status		<p>The Housing Association Guide - Design Guide requirements are the standard that all social housing provision is required to meet. The policy objective is to review the Design Guide to consider if there can be a more flexible approach to provide RHAs more freedom without compromising on quality/ outcomes, and to ensure that DfC continues to get value for money in social housing delivery. There are no opportunities to better</p>

Section 75 category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
		promote equality of opportunity.
Sexual orientation		The Housing Association Guide - Design Guide requirements are the standard that all social housing provision is required to meet. The policy objective is to review the Design Guide to consider if there can be a more flexible approach to provide RHAs more freedom without compromising on quality/ outcomes, and to ensure that DfC continues to get value for money in social housing delivery. There are no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity.
Men and women generally		The Housing Association Guide - Design Guide requirements are the standard that all social housing provision is required to meet. The policy objective is to review the Design Guide to consider if there can be a more flexible approach to provide RHAs more freedom

Section 75 category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
		without compromising on quality/ outcomes, and to ensure that DfC continues to get value for money in social housing delivery. There are no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity.
Disability		The Housing Association Guide - Design Guide requirements are the standard that all social housing provision is required to meet. The policy objective is to review the Design Guide to consider if there can be a more flexible approach to provide RHAs more freedom without compromising on quality/ outcomes, and to ensure that DfC continues to get value for money in social housing delivery. There are no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity.
Dependants		The Housing Association Guide - Design Guide requirements are the standard that all social housing provision is

Section 75 category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
		required to meet. The policy objective is to review the Design Guide to consider if there can be a more flexible approach to provide RHAs more freedom without compromising on quality/ outcomes, and to ensure that DfC continues to get value for money in social housing delivery. There are no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity.

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

Good relations category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact minor/major/none
Religious belief	The proposals outlined in this screening exercise are not expected to have any impact on good relations between people of different religious belief.	None
Political opinion	The proposals outlined in this screening exercise are not expected to have any impact on good relations between people of different political opinion.	None

Good relations category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact minor/major/none
Racial group	The proposals outlined in this screening exercise are not expected to have any impact on good relations between people of different racial groups.	None

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good relations category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
Religious belief		No – there is no opportunity to better promote good relations between people of different religious beliefs.
Political opinion		No – there is no opportunity to better promote good relations between people of different political opinion.
Racial group		No – there is no opportunity to better promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

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).

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

If the outcome of this Review recommends a change to Design Standards, bringing with it a reduction in costs, it has the potential to increase the number of new homes provided, which will have a positive impact for those on the waiting list regardless of Section 75 category, including those people with multiple identities.

Part 3. Screening decision

In light of your answers to the previous questions, do you feel that the policy should: (please underline one)

1. **Not be subject to an EQIA**
2. **Not be subject to an EQIA (with mitigating measures /alternative policies)**
3. **Be subject to an EQIA**

If 1 or 2 (i.e. not be subject to an EQIA), please provide details of the reasons why:

We are satisfied that this Review will have no adverse impact on equality of opportunity and no scope to better promote equality or good relations.

If 3. (i.e. to conduct an EQIA), please provide details of the reasons:

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.

N/A

Part 4. Monitoring

Effective monitoring will help identify any future adverse impacts arising from the policy which may lead you to conduct an EQIA, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

You 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, then you should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Please detail proposed monitoring arrangements below:

This is a purely technical policy review. Stakeholder engagement on the review of the Housing Association Guide – Design Guide would be the first feedback on any adverse impact that potential revisions may have on S75 groups. There is also continuous engagement between NIHE and RHAs on the programme progress where early impacts would be highlighted.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by:	Position/Job Title	Date
Seamus Hillock	Staff Officer	13.05.26
Approved by:		
David Polley	Director	13.05.26

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.