

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

Public Libraries Policy

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

New

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

The new policy for public libraries will replace the current policy, entitled Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries, published by DCAL around 2006. The policy will set out broad strategic aims for the public library service delivered by Libraries NI, an Arm's Length Body of the Department for Communities.

The aims will necessarily reflect and will not run contrary to the legislative duty as set out in the Libraries Act (2008) Northern Ireland and the key policy

themes will reflect the Department for Communities' mission, 'Supporting People, Building Communities and Shaping Places'.

The policy will reflect the central role libraries play in communities as a valued public service with multi-faceted benefits for all users. It will highlight the role of libraries as safe, welcoming places for everyone.

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

Yes.

If Yes, explain how.

While the library service is for everyone to use and enjoy, the policy will recognise the important role libraries play in the lives of those who fall into one or more Section 75 groups, those who find it challenging to access library and other services, and also for newcomers to Northern Ireland.

In the public consultation phase, there will be further opportunity for representatives of Section 75 groups to input to ensure the policy is fully inclusive.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The policy was initiated by Communities Minister and will be developed and written by the Culture Policy Branch (Department for Communities).

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The policy is owned by the Department for Communities. Implementation of policy lies largely with Libraries NI, Northern Ireland's single public library authority.

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 _____

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 – Libraries NI is the delivery agent and therefore a key stakeholder.

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they and who owns them?

- The new policy for public libraries forms part of an interconnected suite of policies under the Heritage, Culture and Creativity (HCC) programme. Separate policies will also be developed for arts, heritage and museums, all owned by the Department for Communities.
- Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries – Department for Communities
- Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 – NI Executive

- Building Inclusive Communities 2020 – 2025 – Department for Communities
 - Children and Young People’s Strategy 2020-2030 – NI Executive
 - Green Growth Strategy – NI Executive
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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
Religious belief	The experience of culture, arts and heritage by adults in Northern Ireland 2024/25 found similar use of the public library service between Protestants (21%) and Catholics (22%). A higher number of people with another or no religion (28%) using the public library service was recorded.
Political opinion	No evidence / information available.
Racial group	In relation to ethnicity, Libraries NI statistics determine that the percentage of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) active members in 2023/24 was 3.79% of active members. 56.37% of active members classed themselves as white and 39.84% did not provide this information.
Age	The 2022 Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey experience of culture, arts and heritage by young people in Northern Ireland report found only 29% Year 12 pupils (aged 15 – 16) to have used a public library service in the previous year compared to 61% of Year 8 pupils (aged 11 – 12).

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information
	The 2022 Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey experience of culture, arts and heritage by young people in Northern Ireland report found girls (52%) more likely to use a public library service than boys (34%). The experience of culture, arts and heritage by adults in Northern Ireland 2024/25 found adults aged 44 and under were more likely (30%) to have used a public library service than those aged 45 and older (18%). Libraries NI has circa. 266,500 active members, circa. 95,000 of whom are aged 15 or under. Circa. 45,500 members are 'senior citizens' aged 60 years or over.
Marital status	The experience of culture, arts and heritage by adults in Northern Ireland 2024/25 found 24% of public library service users were married or cohabited, with similar values of users being
Sexual orientation	No evidence / information available.
Men and women generally	The experience of culture, arts and heritage by adults in Northern Ireland 2024/25 included questions on use of public libraries by gender. Women (28%) were found to be more likely to use a library than men (17%).
Disability	The 2022 Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey experience of culture, arts and heritage by young people in Northern Ireland report found no difference in usage of a public library for young people with a disability compared to those without. The experience of culture, arts and heritage by adults in Northern Ireland 2024/25 found that adults without a

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information
	disability were more likely to use the public library service (24%) compared to those with a disability (21%). Libraries NI has circa. 3,800 active members who have stated they have a disability. Accessibility to 98 library facilities: • 87/98 library facilities have automatic or push pad entrance. • 96/98 library facilities can be fully accessed by wheelchair (all floors). For Crumlin and Richhill libraries only the ground floor can be accessed by wheelchair. • 91/98 library facilities have wheelchair-accessible toilets.
Dependants	The experience of culture, arts and heritage by adults in Northern Ireland 2024/25 found those with dependents were more likely to use the public library service (28%) compared to those who do not (19%). Libraries NI's Safeguarding Policy stipulates that a child under eight years of age must be accompanied by a parent / carer.

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 culturepolicy@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	No specific needs have been identified in respect of religious belief. Public libraries need to be safe, inclusive spaces where users can hold religious beliefs without fear of prejudice, discrimination, threat or intimidation. Libraries need to meet the needs and interests of people living in Northern Ireland and will therefore have books and resources in connection with religious beliefs.
Political opinion	No specific needs have been identified in respect of political opinion. Public libraries need to be safe, inclusive spaces where users can hold political opinions without fear of prejudice, discrimination, threat or intimidation. Libraries need to meet the needs and interests of people living in Northern Ireland and will therefore have books and resources in connection with politics and political opinion.
Racial group	Public libraries need to be safe, inclusive spaces where all racial groups feel welcome to engage without fear of prejudice, discrimination, threat or intimidation. Libraries need to meet the needs and interests of people living in Northern Ireland, including newcomers to the

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
	country. Libraries can help migrants and minority communities settle and assimilate through the provision of books, resources, and signposting to public and other services. Libraries NI engages with the Migrant Forum, Councils and other organisations to improve customer experience and provides reading collections in a number of languages other than English. The use of other available resources in libraries, such as Reachdeck and Say Hi app, support individuals and groups within this category.
Age	Public libraries need to be safe, inclusive spaces where people of all ages feel welcome to engage without fear of prejudice, discrimination, threat or intimidation. Libraries need to meet the needs and interests of people living in Northern Ireland, including those with age-specific needs. Libraries support child development and literacy through books, resources, and programmed events e.g. Big Summer Read, Rhythm and Rhyme, Lego Club, etc. Libraries also have several programmed events aimed primarily at bringing older people together to learn and engage with one another e.g. Tea and Newspaper, Knit and Knatter, Give it a go week, Positive Aging etc.
Marital status	No specific needs have been identified in respect of marital status. Public libraries need to be safe, inclusive spaces where people feel welcome to engage irrespective of marital status without fear of prejudice, discrimination, threat or intimidation.

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Sexual orientation	Public libraries need to be safe, inclusive spaces where people feel welcome to engage irrespective of sexual orientation without fear of prejudice, discrimination, threat or intimidation. Libraries need to meet the needs and interests of people living in Northern Ireland and will therefore have books and resources relating to LGBTQ+ matters.
Men and women generally	Public libraries need to be safe, inclusive spaces where people feel welcome to engage irrespective of gender without fear of prejudice, discrimination, threat or intimidation. Libraries need to meet the needs and interests of people living in Northern Ireland and will therefore have books, resources and programmed events aimed primarily men or women e.g. Men's Health Week, International Women's Day.
Disability	Public libraries need to be safe, inclusive spaces where people feel welcome to engage irrespective of disability without fear of prejudice, discrimination, threat or intimidation. Libraries and the services they provide need to be accessible to people with a disability. Libraries need to meet the needs and interests of people living in Northern Ireland and have books, resources and programmed events connected to living with a disability.

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
	Libraries NI has held partnership events with a number of disability groups, including DeafBlind UK, Guide Dogs for the Blind, RNIB, RNID.
Dependants	Public libraries need to be safe, inclusive spaces where people feel welcome to engage, irrespective of whether or not they have dependents, without fear of prejudice, discrimination, threat or intimidation. Libraries need to meet the needs and interests of people living in Northern Ireland and will therefore have books, resources and programmed events to support carers. Libraries NI's Safeguarding Policy stipulates that a child under eight years of age must be accompanied by a parent / carer.

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
Religious belief	The policy will seek to encourage greater engagement with public libraries across all sections of our society. We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to their religious beliefs. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. Where there are real or perceived barriers, the policy will seek to address these. The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society.	None
Political opinion	The policy will seek to encourage greater engagement with public libraries across all sections of our society. We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to their political opinion. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. Where	None

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
	there are real or perceived barriers, the policy will seek to address these. The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society.	
Racial group	The policy will seek to encourage greater engagement with public libraries across all sections of our society. We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to their racial group. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. Where there are real or perceived barriers, the policy will seek to address these. The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society.	None
Age	The policy will seek to encourage greater engagement with public libraries across all sections of our society. We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to their age. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. Where there are	None

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
	real or perceived barriers, the policy will seek to address these. The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society. This will include continued delivery and support of programmes and activities which assist children, young adults and families in learning and gaining life skills. Also supported will be classes and activities for older people, such as IT literacy, 'Knit and Natter' and 'Tea and Newspapers'.	
Marital status	The policy will seek to encourage greater engagement with public libraries across all sections of our society. We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to their marital status. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. Where there are real or perceived barriers, the policy will seek to address these. The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society.	None

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Sexual orientation	The policy will seek to encourage greater engagement with public libraries across all sections of our society. We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to their sexual orientation. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. Where there are real or perceived barriers, the policy will seek to address these. The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society.	None
Men and women generally	The policy will seek to encourage greater engagement with public libraries across all sections of our society. We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to their gender. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. Where there are real or perceived barriers, the policy will seek to address these. The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to	None

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
	promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society.	
Disability	The policy will seek to encourage greater engagement with public libraries across all sections of our society. We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to their disability. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. Where there are real or perceived barriers, the policy will seek to address these. The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society.	None
Dependants	The policy will seek to encourage greater engagement with public libraries across all sections of our society. We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to dependents. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. Where there are real or perceived barriers, the policy will seek to address these. The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to	None

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
	promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society.	

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		The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society. During the course of finalising this policy, it will be subject to public consultation. The consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies will be considered at this point if new issues emerge as a result of consultee responses.
Political opinion		The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and

Section 75 category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
		programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society. During the course of finalising this policy, it will be subject to public consultation. The consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies will be considered at this point if new issues emerge as a result of consultee responses.
Racial group		The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society. During the course of finalising this policy, it will be subject to public consultation. The consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies will be considered at this point if new issues emerge as a result of consultee responses.

Section 75 category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
Age		The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society. During the course of finalising this policy, it will be subject to public consultation. The consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies will be considered at this point if new issues emerge as a result of consultee responses.
Marital status		The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society. During the course of finalising this policy, it will be subject to public consultation. The consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies will be

Section 75 category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
		considered at this point if new issues emerge as a result of consultee responses.
Sexual orientation		The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society. During the course of finalising this policy, it will be subject to public consultation. The consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies will be considered at this point if new issues emerge as a result of consultee responses.
Men and women generally		The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society. During the course of finalising this policy, it will be subject to public

Section 75 category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
		consultation. The consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies will be considered at this point if new issues emerge as a result of consultee responses.
Disability		The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society. During the course of finalising this policy, it will be subject to public consultation. The consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies will be considered at this point if new issues emerge as a result of consultee responses.
Dependants		The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect

Section 75 category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
		diversity within our society. During the course of finalising this policy, it will be subject to public consultation. The consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies will be considered at this point if new issues emerge as a result of consultee responses.

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	We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to religious beliefs. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society.	None

Good relations category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact minor/major/none
Political opinion	We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to political opinion. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society.	None
Racial group	We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to racial group. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. The policy will encourage public libraries to use facilities, resources, collections and programming to promote, celebrate and reflect diversity within our society.	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		Public libraries are inclusive, welcoming spaces for all and can play a role in fostering respect and understanding between people, promoting and reflecting the rich diversity within our society, including that connected to religious belief.
Political opinion		Public libraries are inclusive, welcoming spaces for all and can play a role in fostering respect and understanding between people, promoting and reflecting the rich diversity within our society, including that connected to political opinion.
Racial group		Public libraries are inclusive, welcoming spaces for all and can play a role in fostering respect and understanding between people, promoting and reflecting the rich diversity within our

Good relations category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
		society, including that connected to race.

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.

We have not flagged any adverse impacts for each S75 category and the evidence available does not indicate that people with multiple identities would be negatively impacted either. Any impacts of this policy should be positive including those with multiple identities. Where there are real or perceived barriers, the policy will seek to address these.

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 do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to any of the Section 75 groups. Any impacts of this policy should be positive and therefore an EQIA is not required.

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.

Not applicable. We do not expect there to be any adverse impact on people relating to any of the Section 75 groups. Any impacts of this policy should be positive. Where any adverse impacts are identified, mitigation will be considered.

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:

The new policy will be underpinned by a range of indicators to monitor the success or otherwise of policy aims. The policy for public libraries provides a high-level policy position for Libraries NI to implement. Libraries NI conducts its own equality screening for its policies and for significant operational decisions. Where monitoring and evaluation indicates that this policy results in an adverse impact for Section 75 groups, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the policy will be reviewed.

Screened by:	Position/Job Title	Date
Simon Morton	Culture Policy Branch	08/09/2026
Approved by:		
John Ball	Director, Culture Division	16/9/2026