



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

The Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order (Northern Ireland) 2024

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

Existing

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

The proposed statutory rule specifies the percentage by which the guaranteed minimum pension (GMP) element of an individual's occupational pension entitlement is increased with effect from 6 April 2024 (a person could accrue a GMP in a contracted-out occupational pension scheme between 1978 and 1997). The Order is a routine, annual order that is purely technical in nature.

Before April 1997, a defined benefit occupational pension scheme contracted out of the State Earnings Related Scheme had to provide a GMP. Entitlement to a GMP gives a member of a contracted-out occupational pension scheme the right to receive a defined minimum amount of earnings-related pension from the scheme. The amount of GMP on retirement equates to the pension to which the member would have been entitled had he remained in the State Earnings Related Scheme. This is the minimum that the scheme must provide and most scheme members can expect pensions in excess of the GMP. Once in payment GMPs are reviewed annually to ensure that their value is not eroded by inflation.

Under section 109 of the Pension Schemes Act 1993, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is required in each tax year to review the general level of prices in the period of 12 months since the last review. If the Secretary of State concludes that prices have increased at the end of the period under review, the Secretary of State is required to make an order specifying the percentage by which that part of the GMP attributable to earnings factors between the tax years 1988-1989 and 1996-1997 is to be increased. The Order requires contracted-out occupational pension schemes to protect GMPs against inflation up to a maximum of 3 per cent. During the latest review period the general level of prices increased by 6.7 per cent. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions therefore made an order under section 109(4) of the Pension Schemes Act 1993 prescribing an increase of 3 per cent.

Whenever the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions makes such an order, the Department is empowered to make a corresponding order. The Department has no power to set different percentages for Northern Ireland.

Schemes are not required to pay a GMP in respect of service after 6 April 1997. Instead schemes must meet a statutory standard. Under Article 51 of the Pensions (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, the scheme is required annually to uprate pensions attributable to service after 6 April 1997 by the lesser of the increase in the Consumer Prices Index or the applicable statutory percentage (5 per cent for service up to 6 April 2005 and 2.5 per cent for service after that date).

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

No

If Yes, explain how.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Department for Work and Pensions.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The Department for Work and Pensions owns the policy. The Department for Communities implements the policy in Northern Ireland but has no power to set different percentages for Northern Ireland.

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision? **No**

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 - Members of occupational pension schemes entitled to the increase in GMP.

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they and who owns them?

N/A

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 categories	This annual, routine order implements a statutory duty to increase the guaranteed minimum pension percentage in line with the corresponding Order made by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in relation to Great Britain. The Department considers this policy to be technical in nature and as such, there is no relevant evidence or information available to inform this screening.

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:

Department for Communities,
Social Security Policy and Legislation Division,
Level 8, Causeway Exchange,
1-7 Bedford Street,
BELFAST
BT2 7EG

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

All categories	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences and priorities for people within any of the Section 75 categories in relation to this policy.
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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 categories	No impact identified	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
All categories		No. This annual, routine order implements a statutory duty to increase the guaranteed minimum pension percentage in line with the corresponding Order made by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in relation to Great Britain.

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
All good relations categories	No impact identified	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
All good relations categories		No. This annual, routine order implements a statutory duty to increase the guaranteed minimum pension percentage in line with the corresponding Order made by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in relation to Great Britain.

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.

None

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:

This routine, annual Order the Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order (Northern Ireland) 2024, implements a statutory duty to increase the guaranteed minimum pension percentage in line with the corresponding Order made by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in relation to Great Britain. The order is purely technical in nature and it does not reflect a new policy or a change to existing policy. It is not expected to have any impact on Equality of Opportunity or Good Relations for any of the Section 75 Groups, 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.

No mitigations required.

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 Order is a routine, annual technical order which specifies the percentage by which the guaranteed minimum pension element (GMP) of an individual's occupational pension entitlement is increased with effect from 6 April 2024. The percentage is set annually by the Department for Work and Pensions in Great Britain following a review of the general level of prices and the Department has no power to set a rate that is different from that set in Great Britain.

As this relates to occupational pension schemes it will be the responsibility of employers of members of relevant/eligible occupational pension schemes to ensure compliance of the entitlement increase for members as set out in this Order.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by:	Position/Job Title	Date
Iris Bush An officer of the Department for Communities	SO	07/03/2024
Approved by:		
David Tarr A senior officer of the Department for Communities	Grade 5	07.03.24

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.