

Consultation Schedule – The Council Meeting 2 September 2025

	RECEIVED FROM	TITLE	SUBMISSION BY
1.	Northern Health and Social Care Trust	Survey on how Involvement Team support involvement and experience across the Northern HSC Trust	15 August 2025 (expired)
	<p>We need your help to shape how the Involvement Team support involvement and experience across the Northern HSC Trust.</p> <p>We are developing our new 3-year strategy to guide how we support involvement and experience across the Northern HSC Trust. The Involvement Team supports staff and our service users, carers and the public to work together more effectively through:</p> <p>Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) – involving people in shaping, designing, and improving services, and;</p> <p>Patient Client Experience (PCE) gathering and learning from feedback and lived experience, through platforms like Care Opinion and 10,000 More Voices.</p> <p>We want to hear your views on what support is needed to make involvement and experience gathering more meaningful, inclusive, and impactful.</p> <p>This short survey takes around 5 – 7 minutes to complete - Survey closes on 15 August.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/hsc/61dafd09 		
2.	Department for Communities	Consultation on Shaping Sustainable Places	21 September 2025
	<p>Shaping Sustainable Places aims to create a flagship programme of interventions to arrest the decline in our valued village, town and city centres.</p>		

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	<p>Shaping Sustainable Places lays the foundation for new ways of delivering regeneration outcomes. We aim to engage communities at the earliest stages of planning for change, developing solutions to specific place-based challenges through funding local physical and infrastructure projects.</p> <p>Consultation closes 21 September 2025, 11.59 pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on Shaping Sustainable Places Department for Communities 		
3.	Department of Health	Consultation on the HSC Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework	26 September 2025
	<p>As part of the Public Consultation of the Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing (EHWB) Framework, we are pleased to offer a series of in person and online seminars to provide further information which will take place as follows:-</p> <p><u>In person Seminars:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 27th August at 10.30am to 12.30pm – Boardroom, Tower Hill, Armagh BT61 9DP • Friday 29th August at 10.30am to 12.30pm – Committee Room 4, County Hall, 182 Galgorm Road, Ballymena BT42 1QB • Monday 1st September at 2pm to 4pm – Boardroom, Gransha Park House, 15 Gransha Park, Clooney Road, Londonderry BT47 6FN • Thursday 4th September at 2pm to 4pm – Conference Room CR2, 12-22 Linen Hall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS 		

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	RECEIVED FROM	TITLE	SUBMISSION BY
	<p><u>Online Seminars:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thursday 28th August from 2pm to 4pm Monday 8th September from 10am to 12pm Thursday 11th September from 2pm to 4pm Thursday 11th September from 6pm to 8pm Friday 12th September from 10am to 12pm Monday 15th September from 6pm to 8pm. The online seminars will take place on Microsoft Teams, please register your interest and a link will be shared. <p>If you would like to attend any of these information seminars, please register your interest by emailing the Regional Emotional Health and Wellbeing (EHWB) Team at the following email address Regional.EHWB@hscni.net indicating which seminar you would like to attend.</p> <p>Consultation closes on 26 September 2025 at 5pm.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation on the HSC Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework Department of Health 		
4.	Northern Ireland Assembly	Dilapidation Bill	10 October 2025
	<p>The Dilapidation Bill aims to confer functions on district councils in connection with the dilapidation of buildings and other land.</p>		

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	RECEIVED FROM	TITLE	SUBMISSION BY
	<p>As part of the Assembly's normal legislative processes, the Dilapidation Bill has been referred to the Assembly's Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (AERA) for scrutiny and evaluation.</p> <p>The Committee is seeking views from stakeholders on the objectives, proposals and potential consequences of the Bill. Your views will help to inform the AERA Committee's consideration of the Bill and any recommendations it may suggest as it moves to the next stage of the legislative process.</p> <p>Dilapidation Bill - Northern Ireland Assembly - Citizen Space</p>		
5.	Department of Health and Social Care	UK wide consultation - Medicines responsibilities for regulated non-medical healthcare professionals	28 October 2025
	<p>The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has been working with the Department of Health in NI, along with NHS England (NHSE) and other devolved governments for several years, to consider how to facilitate the extension of medicines responsibilities (prescribing, supply or administration of medicines) for regulated non-medical healthcare professionals to support patient access to medicines and alleviate pressure on the NHS.</p> <p>As a result of the above, a 12-week UK-wide public consultation has been launched on the development of legislative proposals to amend the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 (HMRs) to extend the medicines responsibilities of paramedics, physiotherapists and operating department practitioners, and to enable diagnostic radiographers working at an advanced, enhanced and consultant level to train to become independent prescribers for medicines within their scope of practice.</p> <p>The consultation is open for 12 weeks and will close at 11:59pm on 28 October 2025.</p> <p>Proposals to extend medicines responsibilities for paramedics, physiotherapists, operating department practitioners and diagnostic radiographers - GOV.UK</p>		

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6.	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs	Annual Progress Report	
	<p>The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has submitted its Annual Progress Report (APR) for 2024–25 to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, in line with its obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Section 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.</p> <p>Should you require any further information or wish to discuss any aspect further please do not hesitate to contact us at equality@darea-ni.gov.uk</p> <p>We also welcome any feedback or comments you may have on the report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual progress reports to the Equality Commission (DAERA) Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs 		
7.	Department of Health	Annual Progress Report	
	<p>The Department of Health has submitted its Annual Progress Report (APR) for 2024–25 to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, in line with its obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Section 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.</p> <p>The report outlines the Department’s progress in implementing its Equality Scheme, Equality Action Plan, and Disability Action Plan, and highlights key achievements, ongoing challenges, and future priorities in promoting equality and inclusion across health and social care.</p> <p>We welcome any feedback or comments you may have on the report or the Department’s equality and disability-related work. Please feel free to contact the Equality and Human Rights Unit at equalityandhumanrights@health-ni.gov.uk should you wish to discuss any aspect further.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Authority 2024-25 Annual Progress Report.pdf 		

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Available to View

RECEIVED FROM	TITLE	PUBLISHED
NI Civil Service	Equality Screening - Hybrid Working policy review	Attached below
Department of Health	DoH Policies screened during the period - 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025	https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/doh-policies-screened-during-period-1-april-2025-30-june-2025

Open Consultations (previously Listed)

- Department for Infrastructure Consultation on a Grant Scheme to support reservoir managers with the initial requirements of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 submission by 16 September 2025
- Department of Health Consultation on the HSC Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework **submission deadline extended to 5pm on Friday 26th September.**
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEARA) Consultation on the draft Remediation Strategy for the Mobouy Site – 2 October 2025
- Linda Dillon, MLA Consultation on the Breastfeeding Bill (2025) Survey submission by 24 October 2025
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Public Consultation on the Timetable and Work Programme for Developing the Forth Cycle River Basin Management Plan submission by 3 January 2026

DoF Screening template

Screening is the first of two methods by which the necessary level of “regard” is demonstrated as being paid to the statutory equality goal, as set out in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The DoF Equality Scheme commits us to screening our policies. This includes our strategies and plans, policies, legislative developments; and new ways of working such as – the introduction, change or end of an existing service, procedure, policy etc.

This screening template is designed to help business areas consider the likely equality and human rights impacts of their proposed decisions on different groups of customers, service users, staff and visitors.

Detailed information about the Section 75 equality duties and what they mean in practice is available on the Equality Commission’s website: <http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/S75GuideforPublicAuthoritiesApril2010.pdf>

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 accessible on the DoF website as soon as possible following completion and made available in alternative formats on request.

All Section 75 consultees should be advised of the screening exercise once the final policy decision has been taken.

The screening template has 4 sections to complete. These are:

Section A - details about the policy / decision that is being screened.

Section B - 4 key questions that require you to outline the likely impacts on equality groups, and all supporting evidence.

Section C - 4 key questions in relation to obligations under the Disability Discrimination Order and the Human Rights Act.

Section D - the formal record of the screening decision.

SECTION A

Information about the policy

This 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 on a step-by-step basis.

Remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for us) as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by us).

Is this a new or revised policy?

Revised policy

a) Name of the policy

NICS Hybrid Working policy

b) Brief Description of the policy

The NICS Hybrid Working policy was developed and first published in December 2021. Workstyle agreements were agreed and introduced when COVID-19 restrictions enabled the policy to be implemented in June 2022. When developed, it was agreed that the policy should be subject to regular review to ensure it met the needs of the service and considered any new and emerging aspects of hybrid working.

The policy is open to all staff including temporary agency workers and the scope for the extent of hybrid working possible will be dependent on business need and the job role. Arrangements under the policy do not create any entitlement to work from home on a contractual basis nor does it automatically apply that a previously agreed hybrid working

arrangement can continue to be facilitated if a member of staff takes up a new post or if the duties of the role change significantly.

c) Aims of the policy/ Rationale behind the changes

The revised hybrid working policy continues the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) commitment to supporting the agility already offered through hybrid working and other flexible working policies and practices available throughout the NICS.

The NICS seeks to be an employer of choice, now and in the future, continuing to attract a diverse spectrum of employees. The NICS aims to facilitate positive business changes and enhance service delivery whilst also offering work flexibility for staff.

Academic research by the Ulster University (UU) [The Future of Remote Working in Northern Ireland](#) and the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) [Flexible and Hybrid Working practices 2023](#) have been considered.

UU research provided advantages of hybrid working including how it played a key part of the employer offer helping to attract and retain staff; a reduction in commuting times; increased staff wellbeing and available working time. Disadvantages included negative impacts on collaboration; stronger tendency to work in silos at home and organisational values and purpose found to decline with home working.

One report indicated that the majority of those surveyed preferred hybrid working compared to 40% traditional in office working and 16% fully remote working. The study further demonstrated that 37% of UK workers are not willing to work for a company which does not offer hybrid working. The policy was revised to support business needs and staff through the introduction of a minimum 40% workplace attendance requirement.

The CIPD report found that 83% of organisations have hybrid working in place. Over half (52%) of these, require hybrid working employees to be in the workplace for a minimum number of days, with employees most likely to be required in the office two or three days a week.

The most significant change to the policy involves the introduction of a 40% minimum workplace attendance requirement across all depts. The revised policy is developed following benchmarking with other public sector organisations across each of the jurisdictions and the NICS estate strategy.

A further significant change is introduced following results of a Hybrid Working Implementation Survey issued in February 2022 and completed by almost a quarter of NICS staff. Results indicated a need to simplify the request process, to one application form for all staff (and where possible accessed online), rather than having one application form for formal hybrid working requests and a second for casual or incidental working from home/remote working. The new request process has been updated, to enable staff with access to on-line Self-Service, to process their requests online via the APEX FACES platform. Those staff without access to on-line services will complete a downloadable version of the form available via the Employee Services Portal.

Additionally, the policy, procedure and FAQs has been updated to clarify issues highlighted in the Hybrid Working Implementation Survey, including management of part-time workers and the level of decision makers and management of requests for reasonable adjustments.

Consultation has taken place with the five recognised trade unions within the NICS – NIPSA, FDA and POA for non-industrial staff and GMB and Unite for industrial staff.

d) Who will the policy affect?

The Hybrid Working Policy applies to all permanent and fixed-term employees, agency workers and those seconded to the NICS. Hybrid working is one of several flexible working arrangements in the NICS.

New entrants to the NICS may also apply for hybrid working on appointment. Advertising jobs which include hybrid and flexible working opportunities could encourage both younger people and women to apply for work in the NICS. Younger staff, especially newer members of staff may feel more isolated and lonelier, and their home environments may be less conducive to home working. At the same time younger people applying for posts expect more flexibility in the workplace.

Not all job roles are suitable for hybrid working due to the nature of the business. A service wide mapping exercise of job roles was undertaken at the time of developing the NICS Hybrid Working policy. As at October 2021, 24,710 roles had been categorised, encompassing 213 locations indicating that approximately 70% of NICS roles could be carried out on a hybrid basis.

The NICS is committed to ensuring that all staff are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment. It is also committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all colleagues.

This policy applies to all staff and to the managers supporting them.

e) Is this a NICS wide policy?

Yes. The policy applies to all NICS staff.

f) Who will implement the policy?

The review of the policy was undertaken by People and Organisational Development (People &OD). It has been widely consulted on with Departments and recognised trade unions.

Implementation of the policy will be carried out by Departments.

g) Will this policy or revision address an existing inequality?

~~Yes~~/No

If yes, please give details.

h) Will this policy or revision benefit any Section 75 categories?

Yes/~~No~~

If yes, please give details.

The policy may be of benefit for disabled staff. However, this will be dependent on the business area and the job role. Hybrid working has the

potential to benefit disabled staff with mobility or health issues as it will provide increased flexibility around the location from which they work to better meet their needs.

Staff who have occupational health requirements (including workstations) will be supported to have this replicated in their homes where feasible.

Hybrid working meetings can also provide additional benefits to colleagues (including hearing impaired) as technologies make it easier to listen to one individual at a time or implement subtitles on software.

The facilitation of regular home or remote working nearer their home may be considered as reasonable adjustment to working arrangements.

The Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service shows that at 1st January 2024 6.1% of employees had a declared disability. This is an increase of 0.5% following the implementation of Hybrid working within the NICS in 2022. However, this figure remains significantly lower than those who are disabled within the economically active population (10.2%).

The Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service shows that at 1st January 2025 6.4% of employees had a declared disability. This is an increase of 0.3% from 1 January 2024. However, again this figure remains significantly lower than those who are disabled within the economically active population (10.2%).

- i) **Will this policy or revision have an adverse differential impact upon any of the Section 75 groupings?** Yes/No. If yes, please give details.

Section B

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? Set out all evidence below along with details of the different Section 75 groups you have met and / or consulted with to help inform your screening assessment. Please also provide details of priorities and needs identified for each Section 75 group.

The policy review included benchmarking against other governments in each of the jurisdictions in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland to consider the extent and impact of hybrid working policies. Engagement with various stakeholders with relevant knowledge of the policy and Section 75 (equality categories), including NICS Human Resources Business Partners.

Consultation was conducted with each of the NICS recognised Trade Unions, in writing and in person Employee Relations Whitley Subject Committee meetings.

Research highlighted in Section A indicated that younger staff, especially newer members of staff may feel more isolated and lonelier, and their home environments may be less conducive to home working. At the same time younger people applying for posts expect more flexibility in the workplace.

Advertising jobs which include hybrid and flexible working opportunities could encourage women to apply for work in the NICS.

- **Religious belief**

The Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2024 shows that on 1st January 2024 excluding those with a community background

recorded as 'not determined', Protestants made up 49.9% and Catholics 50.1% of the NICS. However, Catholics are still underrepresented in the NICS compared to that of the economically active population with 54.1% of the workforce from a Catholic background.

The Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2025 shows that on 1st January 2025 excluding those with a community background recorded as 'not determined', Protestants made up 49.5% and Catholics 50.5% of the NICS. However, Catholics are still underrepresented in the NICS compared to that of the economically active population with 51.6% of the workforce from a Catholic background.

The Department is not aware of any specific needs or priorities for this category in relation to this policy.

Data sources: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/NICS-Equality-Statistics-2024-Report_99.pdf

<https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/nicshrstats/NICS-Equality-Statistics-2025.html>

- **Political opinion**

The Civil Service does not collect data on the political opinion of its workforce.

Equality commission advise that Community background information can be used as a proxy for political opinion. These figures at 1st January 2024 and 1st January 2025 are detailed on the previous page.

The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2023 found that 30% of the Northern Ireland population describe themselves as Unionist, 28% as Nationalist and 37% as neither.

The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2024 found that 30% of the Northern Ireland population describe themselves as Unionist, 30% as Nationalist and 35% as neither

The Department is not aware of any specific needs or priorities for this category in relation to this policy.

Data sources: [Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey: 2023](#)

[Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey: 2024](#)

- **Racial group**

The Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2024 shows that at 1st January 0.6% of NICS staff were from an ethnic minority (including members of mixed ethnic groups and the Irish Travelling Community). The proportion of NICS staff from an ethnic minority is significantly lower than from the economically active population (3.0%) comparator.

The Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2025 shows that at 1st January 0.7% of NICS staff were from an ethnic minority (including members of mixed ethnic groups and the Irish Travelling Community). The proportion of NICS staff from an ethnic minority is significantly lower than from the economically active population (3.0%) comparator.

The Department is not aware of any specific needs or priorities for this category in relation to this policy.

Note - Data on ethnicity was missing for 2,190 staff (9.1%) in 2024 and 2,066 staff (8.4%) in 2025. These cases are excluded from the analyses.

Data sources: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/NICS-Equality-Statistics-2024-Report_99.pdf

<https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/nicshrstats/NICS-Equality-Statistics-2025.html>

- **Age**

The Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2024 shows that at 1st January 2024 the NICS has an older age profile than the economically active population 16-65+ comparator. In particular, the

proportion of NICS staff aged 55 or over was 28.8%, while only 13.4% of NICS staff were aged 16-34.

The Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2025 shows that at 1st January 2025 the NICS has an older age profile than the economically active population 16-65+ comparator. In particular, at 1 January 2025, the percentage of NICS staff aged 55 or over is just over one and a half times that of the economically active population 16-65+. In contrast the percentage of staff aged 16-24 is 2.2% compared with 13.7% in the economically active population.

Younger colleagues, especially those newer members of staff may feel more isolated and lonelier, and their home environments may be less conducive to home working. At the same time younger people applying for posts expect more flexibility in the workplace.

Data sources: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/NICS-Equality-Statistics-2024-Report_99.pdf

<https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/nicshrstats/NICS-Equality-Statistics-2025.html>

- **Marital status**

The Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2024 shows that on the 1st January 2024 that 35.0% staff in the NICS were recorded as single, and 57.6% as married.

The Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2025 shows that on the 1st January 2025 that 37.4% staff in the NICS were recorded as single, and 55.3% as married.

The 2021 Census found that 38.07% of the NI population identified as single, 45.59% as married, 0.18% in a same sex partnership, 3.78% separated, 6.02% divorced or formerly in a same sex partnership which is now dissolved and 6.36% widowed.

The Department is not aware of any specific needs or priorities for this category in relation to this policy.

Data sources: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/files/nisra/publications/NICS-Equality-Statistics-Background-Quality-Report_0.pdf

[Background Quality Report for Equality Statistics in the Northern Ireland Civil Service](#)

- **Sexual orientation**

The Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2024 (Of those staff for whom data are available) shows that at 1st January 2024;

- 3.5% described their orientation as towards someone of the same sex
- 2.4% towards both sexes
- 94.1% towards someone of different sex.

The Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2025 (Of those staff for whom data are available) shows that at 1st January 2025;

- 3.8% described their orientation as towards someone of the same sex
- 3.0% towards both sexes
- 93.1% towards someone of different sex.

The 2021 Census reported the breakdown of the population in Northern Ireland in terms of sexual orientation was:

- 90.04% Heterosexual/Straight
- 4.57% Prefer not to say
- 3.30% Not Stated
- 1.17% Gay/Lesbian
- 0.75% Bisexual

- 0.17% Other sexual orientation

Note - data on sexual orientation was missing for 66.4% in 2024 and 62.1% in 2025 of Civil Service staff. These cases are excluded from the analyses.

The Department is not aware of any specific needs or priorities for this category in relation to this policy.

Data sources: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/files/nisra/publications/NICS-Equality-Statistics-Background-Quality-Report_0.pdf

[Background Quality Report for Equality Statistics in the Northern Ireland Civil Service](#)

- **Men & women generally**

The Equality Statistics for the NICS shows at 1st January 2024 that 50.2% of all NICS staff were female and 49.8% male.

Overall the sex composition of the NICS closely matches that of its comparator population (difference of 0.7 percentage points).

The Equality Statistics for the NICS shows at 1st January 2025 that 50.0% of all NICS staff were female and 50.0% male.

Overall the sex composition of the NICS closely matches that of its comparator population (difference of 0.5 percentage points).

Female staff are anecdotally more likely to take on caring responsibilities. Advertising jobs which include hybrid and flexible working opportunities could encourage more women to apply for work in NICS.

Data sources: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/NICS-Equality-Statistics-2024-Report_99.pdf

[Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service](#)

- **Disability**

The Equality Statistics for the NICS shows at 1st January 2024 6.1% of NICS staff had a declared disability. This is an increase of 0.5% following the implementation of Hybrid working in 2022.

The Equality Statistics for the NICS shows at 1st January 2025 6.4% of NICS staff had a declared disability. This is an increase of 0.8% following the implementation of Hybrid working in 2022.

However, this figure still remains substantially lower than the 10.2% disabled within the economically active population comparator.

The Department is not aware of any specific needs or priorities for this category in relation to this policy.

For staff or potential applicants with a disability, they may find that hybrid working enables them to manage their disability more easily by enabling them to finish work at more suitable times. Disabilities do however vary greatly on how they impact staff in their daily lives and how they impact the working life.

A 'Count me in' campaign is held on an annual basis to encourage staff to update their equality data and provide an evidence base to identify areas where affirmative action is required.

Engagement with colleagues, the NICS Autism Working Group, Disability Staff Network indicates that further action to improve knowledge and understanding in particular of neurodivergent conditions across the organisation is required.

Data sources: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/NICS-Equality-Statistics-2024-Report_99.pdf

[Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service](#)

- **Dependents**

The Equality Statistics for the NICS shows at 1st January 2024 that for those staff which data is available - 37.9% stated they have dependants (January 2024).

The Equality Statistics for the NICS shows at 1st January 2025 that for those staff which data is available - 36.8% stated they have dependants (January 2025).

The term “dependant” however will be open to interpretation and may not capture all cases of caring responsibilities. Collection of this data will be considered in the design of the new HR and finance technology solution currently being procured through the Integr8 Programme.

The Census 2021 indicates that:

- one person in eight of the population aged 5 or more (12.4% / 222,200 people) provided unpaid care to a relative or friend who had a health condition or illness;
- one person in twenty-five (3.8% / 68,700 people) provided 50 or more hours of unpaid care per week; and
- one person in five (124,600 people) of those who provided unpaid care was aged 40 to 64 - this equates to 56.1% of those who provide unpaid care.

Note - Data on dependents is missing for 64.5% of NICS staff in 2024 and 60.2% of staff in 2025. These cases are excluded from the analyses.

The Department is not aware of any specific needs or priorities for this category in relation to this policy.

Data sources: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/files/nisra/publications/NICS-Equality-Statistics-Background-Quality-Report_0.pdf

[Background Quality Report for Equality Statistics in the Northern Ireland Civil Service](#)

If you have no evidence held, outline how you will obtain it:

N/A

Screening questions

There are 4 essential screening questions:

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the nine Section 75 categories? (~~minor/major~~/none)
2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories? (yes/~~no~~)
3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact upon good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (~~minor/major~~/none)
4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between these three groups? (~~Yes~~/No)

Are there likely impacts on Section 75 Categories?

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the nine Section 75 categories?

- **Religious belief:**

Equality of opportunity. There is no evidence to suggest that any staff group will be differentially or negatively impacted by the proposed Hybrid Working policy review.

What is the level of impact? **None**

- **Political opinion:**

Equality of opportunity. There is no evidence to suggest that any staff group will be differentially or negatively impacted by the proposed Hybrid Working policy.

What is the level of impact? **None**

- **Racial group:**

Equality of opportunity. There is no evidence to suggest that any staff group will be differentially or negatively impacted by the proposed Hybrid Working policy.

What is the level of impact? **None**

- **Age:**

Equality of opportunity. There is no evidence to suggest that any staff group will be differentially or negatively impacted by the proposed Hybrid Working policy.

What is the level of impact? **None**

- **Marital status:**

Equality of opportunity. There is no evidence to suggest that any staff group will be differentially or negatively impacted by the proposed Hybrid Working policy.

What is the level of impact? **None**

- **Sexual orientation:**

Equality of opportunity. There is no evidence to suggest that any staff group will be differentially or negatively impacted by the proposed Hybrid Working policy.

What is the level of impact? **None**

- **Men and women generally:**

Equality of opportunity. There is no evidence to suggest that any staff group will be differentially or negatively impacted by the proposed Hybrid Working policy.

What is the level of impact? **None**

- **Disability:**

Equality of opportunity. Since Hybrid working was implemented in 2022 the number of disability staff increased by 0.8% to 6.4% (as at 1 January 2025). This may be in part due to increased opportunities for disabled people e.g. awareness of home/remote working options as a reasonable adjustment. Creating additional opportunities for disabled staff where regular attendance at specific workplaces/locations would have been difficult or problematic.

What is the level of impact? **Minor positive impact**

- **Dependants:**

Equality of opportunity. There is no evidence to suggest that any staff group will be differentially or negatively impacted by the proposed Hybrid Working policy.

What is the level of impact? **None**

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

- **Religious belief:**

This policy applies equally to all staff regardless of Section 75 category.

Opportunity to better promote equality? **No**

- **Political opinion:**

This policy applies equally to all staff regardless of Section 75 category.

Opportunity to better promote equality? **No**

- **Racial group:**

This policy applies equally to all staff regardless of Section 75 category.

Opportunity to better promote equality? **No**

- **Age:**

This policy affects people of all ages.

Opportunity to better promote equality? **No**

- **Marital status:**

This policy applies equally to all staff regardless of Section 75 category.

Opportunity to better promote equality? **No**

- **Sexual orientation:**

This policy applies equally to all staff regardless of Section 75 category.

Opportunity to better promote equality? **No**

- **Men and women generally:**

This policy affects people of all genders.

Opportunity to better promote equality? **No**

- **Disability:**

This policy applies equally to all staff regardless of Section 75 category. However, there is some opportunity to promote equality for disabled staff as it is likely to open up opportunities in hybrid working roles which previously disabled staff may not have considered.

Opportunity to better promote equality? **Yes**

- **Dependants:**

This policy applies equally to all staff regardless of Section 75 category.

Opportunity to better promote equality? **No**

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact upon good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

- **Religious belief:**

Good relations between people of different religious beliefs. There is no evidence to suggest that any staff group will be differentially or negatively impacted by the proposed Hybrid Working policy.

What is the level of impact? **None**

- **Political opinion:**

Good relations between people of different political opinion. There is no evidence to suggest that any staff group will be differentially or negatively impacted by the proposed Hybrid Working policy.

What is the level of impact? **None**

- **Racial group:**

Good relations between people of different racial groups. There is no evidence to suggest that any staff group will be differentially or negatively impacted by the proposed Hybrid Working policy.

What is the level of impact? **None**

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between these three groups?

There is no opportunity to promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and racial grouping within the proposed Hybrid Working policy.

Opportunity to better promote good relations between groups? **No**

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).

The revised policy applies equally to all staff in NICS therefore no one will be differentially or negatively impacted through the policy.

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

None

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.

Alternatively, there may already be policies in place which would mitigate any adverse impact identified.

Mitigation measures proposed:

The member of staff’s immediate line manager will have the authority & flexibility to offer mitigation measures as appropriate.

Section C

DoF also has legislative obligations to meet under the [Disability Discrimination Order](#) and the [Human Rights Act](#) . The following questions relate to these two areas.

Consideration of Disability Duties

Does the proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity for DoF to better **promote positive attitudes** towards disabled people?

Explain your assessment in full

Yes, to a minor degree. Staff with a disability may find that hybrid working enables them to manage their disability more easily by enabling them to flexibility of working location and reducing potential commuting time, enabling disabled person to better manage their condition and remain in work. It should be noted that disabilities vary greatly on how they impact staff in their daily lives and how they impact the working life.

The proposed policy potentially may result in disabled applying for roles they may not have considered in the past but where hybrid working is now an option. With the implementation of hybrid working across the NICS the policy raises awareness of considering hybrid working as a reasonable workplace adjustment. The policy and procedures signpost staff and line managers to the reasonable adjustment guidance and process and reinforce the importance of compliance with obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in regards the duty to make reasonable adjustments.

This may be demonstrated in the 0.8% increase to 6.4% (as at 1 January 2025) in the number of disability staff since Hybrid working was implemented in 2022.

Does the proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity to actively **increase the participation** by disabled people in public life?

Explain your assessment in full

No, impact is minor as detailed above.

Consideration of Human Rights

The Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998 brings the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law and it applies in N Ireland. Articles 3 and 4 are classified as “absolute” rights ie the State can never withhold or take away these rights. All others are either “qualified” or “limited”. Further information is available via the following link

<http://www.nicshumanrightsguide.com/>

Indicate any potential adverse impacts that the policy / decision may have in relation to human rights issues.

Adverse Impact

(delete as appropriate)

Right to Life	Article 2	No
Prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment	Article 3	No
Prohibition of slavery and forced labour	Article 4	No
Right to liberty and security	Article 5	No
Right to a fair and public trial	Article 6	No
Right to no punishment without law	Article 7	No
Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence	Article 8	No
Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Article 9	No
Right to freedom of expression	Article 10	No
Right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association	Article 11	No

Right to marry and to found a family	Article 12	No
The prohibition of discrimination	Article 14	No
Protection of property and enjoyment of possessions	Protocol Article 1	No
Right to education	Protocol Article 2	No
Right to free and secret elections	Protocol Article 3	No

Please indicate any ways which you consider the policy positively promotes human rights.

None

Please explain any adverse impacts on human rights that you have identified.

None

If you have identified any adverse impacts on human rights through this screening you must complete a Human Rights Impact Assessment: <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/human-rights-impact-assessment-proforma>.

Monitoring Arrangements

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's [Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities \(July 2007\)](http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/S75MonitoringGuidance2007.pdf):

<http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/S75MonitoringGuidance2007.pdf>

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).

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.

Please detail proposed monitoring arrangements below:

This policy is kept under review to ensure it takes account of any new legislation, case law, as well as any issues raised by NICSHR on behalf of NICS managers when applying the policy to individual cases.

On occasion NICS will review statistical information to monitor applications for Hybrid working available via APEX FACES..

Feedback is provided on an ongoing basis through NICSHR, with regard to any issues or problems encountered by Departments as a result of terms contained in the policy.

Where queries are raised by staff, line managers, business partners etc. If there are any aspects of the terms and conditions of this policy which appear to be problematic, these will be investigated by the People & OD.

A review of the policy will be commissioned by the end of April 2027.

Section D - Formal Record of Screening Decision

Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being screened:

Hybrid Working policy

I can confirm that the proposed policy / decision has been screened for (i) equality of opportunity, (ii) good relations disabilities duties and (iii) human rights issues

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy / decision is –

* **Screened Out** – No EQIA necessary (no impacts)

Provide a brief note to explain how this decision was reached:

No Section 75 category groups were identified as being differentially or negatively impacted by the implementation of this policy. Whilst the policy has potential to positively impact disabled staff opportunities and awareness, the impacts are minor and non-differential.

Screening assessment completed by -

Name Rory McGarrity
Grade SO
Date 13 March 2025
And approved by –

Name Jayne Forster
Grade G7
Date 30 June 2025

Central Support Team Notified (7 August 2025)

Equality Contacts advised (7 August 2025)

Screening uploaded to DoF website (7 August 2025)