

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY SCREENING

FOR

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING STRATEGY

GUIDANCE

- Please note that this document should always be referred to as an [Equality Screening](#) not an [Equality Impact Assessment](#) (which is a more detailed document requiring a consultation period of at least three months).
- Please use easy to understand language and short sentences. Try to aim for a comprehension level for a P7 pupil.
- Hyperlinks may be added (as can annexes) but avoid tables.
- The screening must explain which Section 75 categories are likely to benefit from (or be impacted by) the policy and how/why this is likely.
- The [screening](#) should show data/statistics specific to the "policy" being screened.
- Monitoring (follow-up action) is an important part of the screening.

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Equality Screening: Teacher Professional Learning Strategy

Further advice can be found in [ECNI - Screening for Public Authorities, Effective Section 75 Equality Assessments: Screening and Equality Assessments \(ECNI, 2017\)](#) and [Section 75: Using Evidence in Policy Making - a signposting guide](#)

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PART ONE

BACKGROUND

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).

1.1 Title of revised policy:

Consultation on Leading Together for Excellence: A TransformED NI Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning.

1.2 Type of policy review/revised policy/pilot/project:

Revised policy - this is a consultation on proposals to update the existing 'Learning Leaders Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning'.

1.3 Description of the policy:

This consultation seeks views on an updated strategy for teacher professional learning, reflecting its critical role in supporting an effective teaching workforce and includes a continuum of Teacher Professional Learning; a renewed set of Teacher Competences alongside Leadership Standards and the establishment of a Northern Ireland Centre for Educational Excellence and Improvement supported by a Unified Digital Professional Learning Platform. It is a strategy for all teachers and so will positively impact on Section 75 groups.

1.4 What factors could contribute to, or detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project?

Contributing factors include the Programme for Government; TransformED and supporting investment. Future industrial action may hinder progress in securing the views of practitioners and the successful implementation of a revised strategy is dependent on stakeholders

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shaping its content and then participating in its implementation. Funding for teacher professional learning has been secured under TransformED however a change of priority after the end of the current mandate in 2027 may impact implementation of the finalised strategy.

1.5 Main stakeholders affected

Access to high-quality, evidence-informed professional learning will impact positively on the teaching workforce, the pupils they teach, their schools and ultimately the education system as a whole. Other affected groups/organisations will include student teachers; HEIs; Trade Unions; DE; DfE; EA; CCMS; ETI; GBA; CSSC; CCEA; NICIE; and CnaG.

1.6 Who is responsible for?

(a) Devising the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project

DE – Teacher Professional Learning Team.

(b) Implementing it

DE in close collaboration with key partners including EA; CCMS; GBA; CSSC; NICIE; CnaG; schools and the teaching workforce.

(c) Explain the relationship?

DE requires delivery partners to co-design, contribute to, collaborate with and implement the strategy.

1.7 Other policies or objectives with a bearing on this policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project

Programme for Government: [Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most](#)

[TransformED](#): Transforming Teaching and Learning: A Strategy for Educational Excellence in Northern Ireland, March 2025

[Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030](#)

[Every School a Good School](#) – a policy for school improvement

[Learning Leaders](#) – Teacher Professional Learning Strategy

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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. The Commission has produced this guide to [signpost to S75 data](#).

- 1.8 What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project in respect of each of the categories?

Religious Belief

The religious breakdown of pupils has been broadly consistent in recent years. A breakdown of the [2024/25 NI School Census](#) figures is provided below and an analysis in enrolment patterns shows an increase in the number and proportion of newcomer pupils, with over 21,350 newcomer pupils recorded, accounting for 6% of the school population and has risen by over 3,960 pupils since 2019/20.

Protestant	Roman Catholic	Other*	Total
100,804	175,500	77,744	354,023
28.5%	49.6%	21.9%	100%

*Other Christian/Non-Christian/Other/No Religion/Not Recorded

Under Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 employers of teachers are not required to monitor the community background of their teaching staff. No information is therefore available.

The strategy will not however have a disproportionate impact based on religious belief, rather its aim is to ensure all teachers are supported throughout their career by high-quality, evidence-informed professional learning.

Political Opinion

Religious belief is taken as a proxy for political opinion

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Racial Group

Pupil - The [2024/25 NI School Census](#) confirms 7.6% of pupils were recorded as being from mixed or minority ethnic groups and there were 21,352 Newcomer pupils in Northern Ireland.

Teachers – No information available however there is no indication that the strategy will have a disproportionate impact based on racial group.

Age

Pupils - In the [2024/25 NI School Census](#) total enrolment was 354,048 children & young people across pre-school, primary and post primary in Northern Ireland.

Teachers - As outlined in the [Teacher Workforce Statistics Bulletin 2024/25](#) the median age of teachers is 43 years, increasing from 42.7 years in 2023/24 with the largest change found in the 50-59 category which saw an increase of 2.5%, going from 21.7% in 2020/21 to 24.2% in 2024/25.

Marital Status

Information not collected for educational purposes.

Sexual Orientation

Not available however there is no indication that the strategy will have a disproportionate impact based on sexual orientation.

Men And Women Generally

Pupils - In the [2024/25 NI School Census](#)

Teachers - As outlined in the [Teacher Workforce Statistics Bulletin 2024/25](#) the male/female breakdown of the workforce is as follows: most notable is the lack

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of male teachers in nursery schools (noted at 0%); in primary and preparatory 15.6% teachers are male, in post primary 30.1% of teachers are male and in special schools 19.9% of teachers are male. At an overall workforce level this translates to 5,010 male teachers and 16,793 female teachers out of a total workforce of 21,803.

At school leader level, in nursery, primary and preparatory schools 36.7% of principals and 29.8% of vice principals are male and in post primary schools 51.1% of principals and 43.3% of vice principals are male.

Disability

Pupils – In the [2024/25 NI School Census](#) over 70,200 pupils have some form of special educational need, 19.8% of the entire school population. Nearly 29,500, or 8.3% of pupils have a statement of special education need. The proportion of pupils in SEN stages 1-2 is 11.5%.

Teachers – no information is available however there is no indication that the Strategy will disproportionately impact based on disability.

Dependants

No information is available however there is no indication that the strategy will disproportionately impact on the basis of dependent status.

NEEDS, EXPERIENCES AND PRIORITIES

- 1.9 Taking into account the evidence gathered at 1.8 what are the needs, experiences and priorities of each category in relation to this particular policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project/decision?

Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below:

Religious Belief

[ECNI Key Equalities in Education](#): “Protestants continue to have lower levels of attainment than Catholics at GCSE, GCSEs including English and Maths, and A Level.” “There is persistent under achievement and lack of progression to further and higher education of school leavers

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entitled to free school meals, particularly Protestants, notably Protestants males.”

Political Opinion

Religious belief is taken as a proxy for political opinion.

Racial Group

[ECNI Key Equalities in Education](#): “Children from the Traveller community and Roma children have some of the lowest levels of attainment of all equality groups.”

Age

[The Institute of Fiscal Studies' Review of Inequalities](#) confirmed that education has a huge effect on life chances. As well as being likely to lead to better wages, higher levels of education are linked with better health, wealth and even happiness. It should be a way for children from deprived backgrounds to escape poverty. However, this study found that children from poorer backgrounds do worse throughout the education system. The report assesses existing evidence using a range of different datasets. These include national statistics published by the Department for Education on all English pupils, as well as a detailed longitudinal sample of young people from across the UK. It shows there are pervasive and entrenched inequalities in educational attainment.

Marital Status

Information not collected for educational purposes.

Sexual Orientation

No information available.

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Men And Women Generally

[ECNI Key Equalities in Education](#): Males continue to have lower levels of attainment than females, beginning in primary school and continuing throughout schooling to GCSE and A Level.

Disability

[ECNI Key Equalities in Education](#): Students with Special Educational Needs or a disability have lower attainment levels than students without, and are less likely to go on to higher education”.

Dependants

[ECNI Key Equalities in Education](#): Young carers often miss out on opportunities that other children have to learn.

PART TWO – SCREENING QUESTIONS

LIKELY IMPACT

- 2.1 What is the likely impact of this policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project on equality of opportunity for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

Please provide details of the likely policy impacts and determine the level of impact for each S75 categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

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;*

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- 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.

The Teacher Professional Learning Strategy will enhance equality of opportunity for all Section 75 groups.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:

What is the level of impact? Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:

What is the level of impact? Minor

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Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:

What is the level of impact? Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**:

What is the level of impact? Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**:

What is the level of impact? Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**:

What is the level of impact? Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**:

What is the level of impact? Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**:

What is the level of impact? Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**:

What is the level of impact? Minor

OPPORTUNITIES TO BETTER PROMOTE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

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

Detail opportunities of how this policy could promote equality of opportunity for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

The Teacher Professional Learning Strategy will enhance equality of opportunity for all Section 75 groups.

Religious Belief – No

Political Opinion – No

Racial Group – No

Age – No

Marital Status - No

Sexual Orientation - No

Men and Women generally - No

Disability – No

Dependants - No

LIKELY IMPACT ON GOOD RELATIONS

2.3 To what extent is the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Please provide details of the likely policy impact and determine the level of impact for each of the categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**: None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: None

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

Detail opportunities of how this policy could better promote good relations for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

The Teacher Professional Learning Strategy will support the professional learning needs of all teachers throughout their careers. The promotion of good relations is a separate policy area with its own deliverables.

Religious Belief - No

Political Opinion – No

Racial Group - No

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

2.5 Please provide details of data on the impact of the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project on people with multiple identities and specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

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 impact of this strategy should be positive for all identities.

PART THREE
SCREENING DECISION

3.1 Please select as appropriate and provide details and reasons:

The decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment but with mitigation or the introduction of an alternative policy.

Reasons

The Teacher Professional Learning Strategy will support the professional learning needs of all teachers at all stages of their careers and thus will impacting positively across all Section 75 groups.

MITIGATION

3.2 If option b was chosen.

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?

The Teacher Professional Learning Strategy will support the professional learning needs of all teachers throughout their careers. The promotion of good relations is a separate policy area with its own deliverables.

TIMETABLING AND PRIORITISING

3.3 If option c was chosen.

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

If the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Not applicable.

PART FOUR
MONITORING

Please detail what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the effect of the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project on any of Section 75 equality categories:

The Strategy will be supported by a detailed implementation plan and a programme board will review progress against the implementation plan on a regular basis.

PART FIVE

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

5.1 Will the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project in any way discourage persons with disabilities from participating in public life or fail to promote positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities?

No

5.2 Is there an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities or encourage participation in public life by making changes to the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project or introducing additional measures?

No

5.3 Please detail what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the effect of the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project with reference to the disability duties.

Not applicable.

PART SIX

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

- 6.1 Does the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project review/revised policy/pilot/project affect anyone's Human Rights?

Particularly consider:

- [The Human Rights Act \(1998\)](#)
- [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)

No

- 6.2 If you have identified a negative impact; what Human Right is impacted, what is the nature of the impact and who is affected and how?

Not applicable.

At this stage you should determine whether to seek legal advice and to refer the issue to the Equality Unit to consider:

- whether there is a law which allows you to interfere with or restrict rights;
- whether this interference or restriction is necessary and proportionate; and
- what action would be required to reduce the level of interference restriction).

- 9.3 Outline any actions which could be taken to promote or raise awareness of human rights or to ensure compliance with the legislation in relation to the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project .

Not applicable.

PART SEVEN
RURAL NEEDS

The undertaking of a [Rural Needs Impact Assessment \(RNIA\)](#) is an integral part of the development, adoption, implementation or review of a policy, strategy or plan or the design or delivery of a public service.

Will a separate RNIA be completed? No

Reason for non-completion: Not applicable.

Completed RNIA's are published on the Department's Internet site and shown under [Rural Needs Impact Assessments](#).

PART EIGHT

APPROVAL AND AUTHORISATION

FOR COMPLETION BY POLICY TEAM

Screened by: Angela Kane Grade 6 Date 30 April 2026

Approved by: Suzanne Kingon Grade 3 Date 30 April 2026

Notes:

The screening form must be approved and 'signed off' by a senior manager responsible for the policy.

The screening form must also be cleared at Grade 3 level.

The TRIM version of the completed Screening Form must be sent to the Equality Team (DE.Equality@education-ni.gov.uk) for quality assurance

FOR COMPLETION BY EQUALITY TEAM

Screening Decision Agreed.

Quality Assured by: G. Smyth Date 30.4.26

Team Informed: Date 30.4.26

RECORDING AND PUBLISHING BY POLICY TEAM

You must store this completed screening form on Content Manager and finalise it. Use the record naming convention "Completed Screening form of....."

Content Manager Ref No: ED1/26/104003

Placed on Internet by policy team Date xxxxxx

As soon as possible, following quality assurance, you must publish a copy of the screening form in Microsoft Word (or other Open Document Format) on the Department's website: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications> with a link on the "Policy Screening" page: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/de-equality-screenings>