

DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

SECTION 75 EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY SCREENING ANALYSIS FORM

The purpose of this form is to help you to consider whether a new policy (either internal or external) or legislation will require a full equality impact assessment (EQIA). Those policies identified as having significant implications for equality of opportunity must be subject to full EQIA.

The form will provide a record of the factors taken into account if a policy is screened out, or excluded for EQIA. It will provide a basis for quarterly consultation on the outcome of the screening exercise, and will be referenced in the biannual review of progress made to the Minister and in the Annual Report to the Equality Commission.

Further advice on completion of this form and the screening process including relevant contact information can be accessed via the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Intranet site ([Equality Intranet page](#)).

HUMAN RIGHTS ACT - refer to the [Equality Intranet page](#)

When considering the impact of this policy you should also consider if there would be any Human Rights implications. Guidance is at:

- <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/human-rights-and-public-authorities>

Should this be appropriate you will need to complete a Human Rights Impact Assessment. A template is at:

- <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/human-rights-impact-assessment-proforma>

Don't forget to RURAL PROOF - refer to the [Equality Intranet page](#).

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

Name of the policy

Bi-lingual traffic Signs Pilot, Gaeltacht Quarter Belfast.

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

New.

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

The scheme will pilot the use of bi-lingual traffic signs, using both Irish and English, in the Gaeltacht Quarter in West Belfast.

Bi-lingual traffic signs and road markings will be installed on the Falls Road between the Springfield Road and Whiterock Road. The provision of the traffic signs and road markings in both Irish and English in the Gaeltacht Quarter will complement the use of these languages by other businesses and organisations in the area.

The pilot complies with Part III of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages to allow and/or encourage (alongside English if necessary), the traditional and correct forms of place names in Irish (Article 10(2)g).

The outcome of this pilot will inform any future policy development decision for bi-lingual signage that may likely require a full EQIA.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?
If so, explain how.

The pilot is proposed for the Gaeltacht Quarter in West Belfast where Irish is often used daily by the community and as such people in the 'Religious belief', 'Political Opinion' and 'Age' categories are likely to benefit from the pilot. Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2019/20 indicated that a higher proportion of Catholics (35%) have knowledge of Irish than both those with other or no religion (8%) and Protestants (3%). The same survey indicated that younger people 16-44 years (19%) are more likely to have knowledge of Irish than those aged 45 years (15%) and over. [Knowledge and use of Irish in Northern Ireland 2019/20](#)

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Minister for Infrastructure initiated the policy which has been written by Transport and Roads Asset Management Group within the Department.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The Minister for Infrastructure owns the policy, and the Department's Eastern Division will implement it.

Background

The Department's current policy is to provide traffic signs in one language, and can and does provide signs in other languages when the destination is primarily known by an Irish or Ulster-Scots name it can be signed as such in the one language, e.g. An Chultúrlann in Belfast.

In response to a request from Forbairt Feirste in 2021 and mindful of its responsibilities under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Language (ECRML) the Department agreed to scope the provision of bi-lingual traffic signs on the Falls Road in the Gaeltacht quarter. Article 10(2)g of the ECRML obliges public authorities to allow and/or encourage (alongside English if necessary), the traditional and correct forms of place names in Irish.

The scope of the pilot would only consider traffic signs which are the Department's responsibility as street name signs and public information/tourist related information boards are the responsibility of Belfast City Council.

In 2011 the then Minister asked the Department to consult on a proposal to allow bi-lingual signing in certain situations and simultaneously undertook an equality impact assessment. The types of signs that could be considered for bi-lingual would have been: town/village place name signs; certain worded supplementary plates to standard warning signs (e.g. 'School'); and certain tourist signs.

The response to the bi-lingual signage provided no clear consensus with respondents either expressing a level of consensus with or opposition to the proposal. Of the 97 substantive replies, 27 indicated support for the proposals, 17 indicated objection to the principle of including a second language on a sign, 45 indicated opposition to the proposals on the basis that they do not go far enough, 5 remained neutral and 3 offered no comment. However, little in the way of data with respect to the equality impact of the proposal was presented. An analysis of the research on the provision of bi-lingual traffic signing at the time also revealed little in the way of equality data in terms of impact, the research mainly concentrating on the appearance and readability of the signs.

In April 2012 the bi-lingual signing proposal was terminated on the basis that there was no operational need in the then challenging economic times. Neither a formal Departmental response nor final EQIA issued.

More recently the request for a pilot from Forbairt Feirste would see the introduction of dual language traffic signing along the length of the Falls Road Belfast, within the Gaeltacht Quarter, and stretching between the Springfield and Whiterock Roads. All the existing traffic signs, including bus lanes, parking and general direction signs will be replaced with dual language alternatives. The Minister for Infrastructure agreed to pursuing the pilot on the basis that the Gaeltacht Quarter is an ideal location for such a pilot and will complement the use of these languages by the community, businesses and other organisations in the area. The Department will monitor reaction to the signs and will seek the public's opinion with regard to the introduction of the pilot and report as necessary,

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

Unfortunately, traffic signs are often used to make political points. The use of legends such as Londonderry and Northern Ireland on some traffic signs has seen both regularly vandalised.

If yes, are they (please delete as appropriate)

~~financial~~

~~legislative~~

other, please specify _____

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon? (please delete as appropriate)

~~staff~~

service users – road users in general

~~other public sector organisations~~

~~voluntary/community/trade unions~~

other, please specify _____

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- what are they?

RsPPG E034 Direction Signs

- who owns them?

The Director of Engineering, DfI Transport and Roads Asset Management Group.

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. The Commission has produced this guide to [signpost to S75 data](#). Also refer to the [Equality Intranet page](#) for some evidence sources.

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement (1998) and subsequent agreements have made several commitments to the Irish language:

Good Friday/Belfast Agreement (1998)

1. **Recognition and Promotion:** The Agreement acknowledged the importance of respect, understanding, and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including the Irish language.
2. **All-Island Language Body:** It established an all-island body, Foras na Gaeilge, to promote the Irish language across the island of Ireland.

St. Andrew's Agreement (2006)

1. **Legislative Framework:** This agreement included a commitment to introduce an Irish Language Act in Northern Ireland, aimed at providing a statutory basis for the Irish language.

New Decade, New Approach (2020)

1. **Irish Language Commissioner:** The agreement proposed the establishment of an Irish Language Commissioner to protect and enhance the use of the Irish language.
2. **Official Status:** It included provisions for the official recognition of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, ensuring its use in public services and signage.

The Council of Europe's **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (the Charter)** came into force in July 2001 after which the UK subscribed to commitments for Irish and Ulster Scots under Part II of the Charter, and a number of provisions for Irish under Part III of the Charter. The Identity and Language Act granted Royal Assent on 6 December 2022 also provides "official recognition of the status of the Irish language" in Northern Ireland, with Ulster Scots being an officially recognised minority language.

As a public body, the Department and associated bodies are obliged to protect and promote regional and minority languages, for example, encouraging users

to communicate in their preferred language and being accepted and replied to in the preferred language. As such we have developed individual Departmental policies for both languages <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/accessible-and-alternative-formats>.

With regards to minority language signage, the Council of Europe has supported this as a way of enhancing the visibility of minority languages. Work is ongoing, led by the Department for Communities on developing the Irish Language and Ulster Scots Language Strategies. The Department for Infrastructure is represented on the Cross Departmental Working Group to discuss and agree the content of the action plan that will sit alongside the new Strategy.

Recommendation 8.13 of the Irish Language Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Recommendation Report states that “...departments, councils and other authorities must, as part of any future strategy, implement a plan to ensure that they are able to provide relevant and accurate bilingual signage in all streets (where demand is measured in accordance with the European Charter), districts, villages, towns, cities, areas, etc., within a reasonable timeframe, as set out in the ‘Public Services’ section of this document”.

The Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 provides official recognition of the status of the Irish language in Northern Ireland by –

- a. providing for the appointment of an Irish Language Commissioner,
- b. providing for the development of standards of best practice relating to the use of the Irish language by public authorities, and
- c. requiring public authorities to have due regard to such standards.

To date no standards of best practice for public bodies have been developed.

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) submitted their Parallel Report for the Sixth Periodic Report of the UK <https://nihrc.org/publication/detail/nihrc-submission-to-the-council-of-europe-committee-of-experts-of-the-european-charter-for-regional-or-minority-languages-parallel-report-for-the-sixth-periodic-report-of-the-uk-and-ni> and NI to the Council of Europe’s Committee of Experts (COMEX) to assess the UK and Northern Ireland’s compliance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML). It focuses on the protection and promotion of the Irish and Ulster Scots languages in Northern Ireland, highlighting legal, administrative, and policy-related issues.

One of the key recommendations relates to place names and street signs and notes inconsistencies in bilingual street signage policies across different council areas. It goes on to call for a standardised, fair approach to bilingual signage that aligns with international best practices.

The NIHRC stresses the need for stronger enforcement, funding, and political will to ensure Irish and Ulster Scots receive adequate protection and promotion in Northern Ireland. The report highlights ongoing political and administrative delays in language policy implementation and urges the NI Executive and UK government to fulfil their commitments under the ECRML.

Several councils in Northern Ireland have adopted policies to incorporate the Irish language into public signage:

- Fermanagh and Omagh District Council: Implemented a Linguistic Diversity Policy that includes bilingual (Irish and English) signage on council stationery, vehicles, and external signage.
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council: Established a Bilingual Language Policy in 2015, resulting in bilingual signage throughout council buildings.
- Mid Ulster District Council: Adopted an Irish Language Policy aligned with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, leading to bilingual signage in council facilities.
- Belfast City Council: Adopted a [new council policy on bilingual street signs](#) in July 2022 after being agreed by a majority of councillors.

According to the 2021 UK Census, 6,000 people (0.3%) in Northern Ireland claim to use Irish as their main home language, with 71,900 people being able to speak Irish (circa 4% of population). 228,600 people overall in NI (12.4%) claimed to have some knowledge of the language.

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/census-2021-main-statistics-for-northern-ireland-phase-1-statistical-bulletin-language.pdf>

According to the 2021 census, out of the 333,748 people residing in Belfast City, 15.5% of people in the city have some knowledge of Irish, and 5.4% of the city's population claim to be able to speak, read, write and understand spoken Irish. 3.9% of people in the city use Irish daily and 0.8% speak it as their main language at home.

Religious belief evidence / information:

The NI Census 2021 records that the breakdown of the “Religion Brought Up In” is Catholic 45.7%; Protestant, and other Christian (including Christian related)

43.48%; Other Religions 1.5% and No Religion 9.32%. The 2021 NI census indicates just over 42% of the population identifies as catholic, approximately 37% identifies as having other Christian beliefs, almost 8 17% identifies as non-religious with the remaining percentage made up of people identifying as other religions or not stating a religion.

Irish Language Ability by Religion or Religion Brought Up In

Religion or Religion Brought Up In	Some Ability in Irish	Some Ability in Irish (%)	No Ability
Catholic	208,137	25%	629,853
Protestant and Other Christian (including Christian related)	12,075	1%	796,331
Other religions	1,868	7%	25,545
None	6,543	4%	156,265

As this pilot is for the Belfast Gaeltacht quarter according to the 2021 census, out of the 333,748 people residing in Belfast City, 15.5% of people have some knowledge of Irish, and 5.4% of the City's population claim to be able to speak, read, write and understand spoken Irish. 3.9% of people in the City use Irish daily and 0.8% speak it as their main language at home.

It is likely that those who fall into this group who are road users and who understand and/or speak the Irish language will be positively impacted by this scheme.

Any issues identified relating to this S75 group will be fully considered.

Political Opinion evidence / information:

Total population data

National Identity (Classification 1) continued Table population: All usual resident

Total Population	British only	Irish only	Northern Irish only	British and Irish only	British and Northern Irish only	Irish and Northern Irish only	British Irish and Northern Irish only	Other
1.9M	31.86%	29.13%	19.78%	0.62%	7.95%	1.76%	1.47%	7.43%

Source: [NI Census 2021](#)

The results from the 2022 Assembly elections indicate that just below 40% of voters identify as nationalist with roughly the same percentage identifying as unionist, the balance being largely made up of voters for the Alliance party which has a 'united community' vision for Northern Ireland.

It is likely that those who fall into this group who are road users and who understand and/or speak the Irish language will be positively impacted by this scheme.

Any issues identified relating to this S75 group will be fully considered.

Racial Group evidence / information:

[NI Census 2021 Data - Ethnic Group](#)

<u>Ethnic Group</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Population (%)</u>
<u>White</u>	<u>1,837,577</u>	<u>97%</u>
<u>Asian</u>	<u>32,482</u>	<u>2%</u>
<u>Black</u>	<u>11,032</u>	<u>1%</u>
<u>Mixed</u>	<u>14,383</u>	<u>1%</u>
<u>Other</u>	<u>7,707</u>	<u>0%</u>

[Irish Language Ability by Ethnic Group](#)

<u>Ethnic Group</u>	<u>Some Ability in Irish</u>	<u>Some Ability in Irish (%)</u>	<u>No Ability in Irish</u>
<u>White</u>	<u>224,489</u>	<u>12.7%</u>	<u>1,549,947</u>
<u>Asian</u>	<u>1,333</u>	<u>4.2%</u>	<u>30,187</u>
<u>Black</u>	<u>745</u>	<u>7.1%</u>	<u>9,692</u>
<u>Mixed</u>	<u>1,054</u>	<u>8.1%</u>	<u>11,901</u>
<u>Other</u>	<u>1,004</u>	<u>13.8%</u>	<u>6,269</u>

[National Identity Table population: All Residents](#)

<u>Total Population</u>	<u>1.9M</u>
<u>British only</u>	<u>31.9%</u>
<u>Irish only</u>	<u>29.1%</u>
<u>Northern Irish only</u>	<u>19.8%</u>
<u>British and Irish only</u>	<u>0.6%</u>
<u>British and Northern Irish only</u>	<u>8.0%</u>

Irish and Northern Irish only	1.8%
British Irish and Northern Irish only	1.5%
Other	7.4%

[Irish Language Ability by National Identity](#)

National Identity - 8 Categories	Some Ability in Irish (%)
British only	1.3%
Irish only	33.0%
Northern Irish only	7.0%
British and Irish only	10.9%
British and Northern Irish only	0.8%
Irish and Northern Irish only	22.6%
British, Irish and Northern Irish only	6.6%
Other	6.3%
Total	12.4%

On Census Day 2021, English was the main language of 95.4% (1,751,500) of the population aged 3 and over. Thus 4.6% (85,100) of people aged 3 and over living in Northern Ireland did not have English as their main language. The most prevalent main languages other than English were Polish (20,100), Lithuanian (9,000), Irish (6,000), Romanian (5,600) and Portuguese (5,000).

Source: [Census 2021 Main statistics for Northern Ireland - Statistical bulletin - Language](#)

Since the 1980s the Irish language has been statistically stronger in Belfast (especially in the west of the city) than anywhere else in Northern Ireland. The city has witnessed a steady growth of active English-Irish bilingualism, concentrated in the electoral wards in the west of the city. According to the 2021 census, out of the 333,748 people residing in Belfast city, 15.5% of people in the city have some knowledge of Irish, and 5.4% of the city's population claim to be able to speak, read, write and understand spoken Irish. 3.9% of people in the city use Irish daily and 0.8% speak it as their main language at home.

Census 2021 - Belfast City Council area	333,748	100%
Has some ability in Irish	51,583	15.48%
Can read, write, speak and understand Irish	17,986	5.39%

Census 2021 - Belfast City Council area	333,748	100%
Speaks Irish Daily	13,110	3.93%
Irish is main language	2,659	0.80%

It is likely that those who fall into this group who are road users and who understand and/or speak the Irish language will be positively impacted by this scheme.

Any issues identified relating to this S75 group will be fully considered.

Age evidence / information:

NI Census 2021 Data

Age Band	Some Ability in Irish	Some Ability in Irish (%)	No Ability
0-15 years	36,648	11%	285,226
16-24 years	31,497	16%	169,872
25-29 years	17,047	15%	99,362
30-34 years	18,052	14%	107,999
35-39 years	18,408	14%	108,905
40-44 years	17,350	14%	104,812
45-49 years	15,687	13%	105,982
50-54 years	15,788	12%	115,178
55-59 years	15,474	12%	113,802
60-64 years	13,056	12%	99,994
65+ years	29,614	9%	296,862

It is likely that those who fall into this group who are road users and who understand and/or speak the Irish language will be positively impacted by this scheme.

Any issues identified relating to this S75 group will be fully considered.

Marital Status evidence / information:

NI Census 2021 Data

<u>Marital and Civil Partnership Status Label</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>Single (never married or never registered a civil partnership)</u>	<u>38%</u>
<u>Married</u>	<u>46%</u>
<u>In a civil partnership</u>	<u>0%</u>
<u>Separated (but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership)</u>	<u>4%</u>
<u>Divorced or formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved</u>	<u>6%</u>
<u>Widowed or surviving partner from a civil partnership</u>	<u>6%</u>

Irish Language Ability by Marital Status

<u>Marital and Civil Partnership Status</u>	<u>Some Ability in Irish</u>	<u>Some Ability in Irish (%)</u>	<u>No Ability</u>
<u>Single (never married or never registered a civil partnership)</u>	<u>83,204</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>493,502</u>
<u>Married</u>	<u>83,524</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>606,984</u>
<u>In a civil partnership</u>	<u>377</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>2,365</u>
<u>Separated (but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership)</u>	<u>7,660</u>	<u>13%</u>	<u>49,612</u>
<u>Divorced or formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved</u>	<u>8,836</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>82,294</u>
<u>Widowed or surviving partner from a civil partnership</u>	<u>8,371</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>88,013</u>

It is likely that those who fall into this group who are road users and who understand and/or speak the Irish language will be positively impacted by this scheme.

Any issues identified relating to this S75 group will be fully considered.

Sexual Orientation evidence / information:

NI Census 2021 Data

<u>Sexual Orientation</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>Straight or heterosexual</u>	<u>90%</u>
<u>Gay, lesbian, bisexual, other sexual orientation</u>	<u>6%</u>
<u>Prefer not to say/Not stated</u>	<u>23%</u>

Irish Language Ability by Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	Some Ability in Irish	Some Ability in Irish (%)	No Ability
Straight or heterosexual	171,612	13%	1,192,246
Gay, lesbian, bisexual, other sexual orientation	5,641	18%	25,975
Prefer not to say/Not stated	14,720	12%	104,548
No code required	36,648	11%	285,226

It is likely that those who fall into this group who are road users and who understand and/or speak the Irish language will be positively impacted by this scheme.

Any issues identified relating to this S75 group will be fully considered.

Men & Women generally evidence / information:

According to the NI Census 2021 the total population of Northern Ireland is 1.9M, of which 51% are female and 49% are male.

Irish Language Ability by Sex

Sex	Some Ability in Irish	Some Ability in Irish (%)	No Ability
Female	117,721	13%	817,022
Male	110,901	12%	790,973

[The Travel Survey NI for 2021](#) shows that in 2021, over four fifths (82%) of respondents held a full car driving licence. There was a higher proportion of men aged 17+ with a full car driving licence (85%) than women aged 17+ (79%).

It is likely that those who fall into this group who are road users and who understand and/or speak the Irish language will be positively impacted by this scheme.

Any issues identified relating to this S75 group will be fully considered.

Disability evidence / information:

According to the NI Census 2021 the total population of Northern Ireland is 1.9M, of which 217,964 day-to-day activities are limited a lot.

Irish Language Ability by Health Problem or Disability (Long-term)

Health Problem or Disability (Long-term)	Some Ability in Irish	Some Ability in Irish (%)	No Ability
Day-to-day activities limited	47,553	10%	413,879
Day-to-day activities not limited	181,063	13%	1,194,116

It is likely that those who fall into this group who are road users and who understand and/or speak the Irish language will be positively impacted by this scheme.

Any issues identified relating to this S75 group will be fully considered.

Dependants evidence / information:

Total population data

- The [2021 NI Census](#) indicated that 46.8% per cent of households in Northern Ireland contained dependent children with nearly 4% of households having a child under the age of 5.
- The census data also indicated that 44% of households contained at least one person with a long-term health problem or disability.

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 of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below).

Religious belief:

The available evidence section outlines the needs of the Irish speaking community in the Gaeltacht Quarter of West Belfast to complement the work being done in the area to promote and develop the use of the Irish language. The various Irish Language groups have also highlighted the need for the Irish language to be more prevalent in society, this is demonstrated in the work being carried out to develop an Irish Language Strategy, for example the [Expert Advisory Panel's Recommendations Report](#).

The NI Census 2021 data has highlighted a notable increase in the number of people in Northern Ireland with some ability to speak Irish compared to the 2011 census, with the percentage of people with some Irish language ability rising from 10.7% in 2011 to 12.4% in 2021.

The people in the piloting area who have a religious belief and have some ability to speak Irish are likely to benefit from the pilot.

Any Section 75 issues identified during the monitoring of the pilot scheme will be considered.

Political Opinion

As outlined above at religious belief.

Any Section 75 issues identified during the monitoring of the pilot scheme will be considered.

Racial Group

In addition to that outlined at religious belief, the pilot scheme is intended to meet our obligations set out in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to promote the Irish language in this instance have bi-lingual road

signs in an area where there is active Irish language community working to promote and re-establish the use of the language.

Age

The available evidence section outlines the age groups of the Irish language in Northern Ireland. The Belfast Gaeltacht Quarter, an area in West Belfast, is home to several Irish-medium primary schools as well as the only Irish medium secondary school in Belfast. Providing bi-lingual signage will complement the education of the Irish language for children and young people in this area. No other specific needs were identified for this group.

Any issues identified through the Department's quarterly consultation exercise with Section 75 and during the pilot will be considered.

Marital status

As outlined in the religious belief section above.

Sexual orientation

As outlined in the religious belief section above.

Men and Women Generally

As outlined in the religious belief section above.

Disability

As outlined in the religious belief section above.

Dependants

As outlined in the religious belief section above

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?

(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).

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**: We do not know at this time how or in what ways dual language traffic signs will affect the equality of opportunity for this group. It is anticipated that those who identify as Irish speakers within this identity and living in the Belfast Gaeltacht Quarter will be a positively impacted by the scheme. The outcome of the pilot scheme will better inform the levels of negative and positive impacts.

What is the level of impact? Potentially major positive

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: We do not know at this time how or in what ways dual language traffic signs will affect the equality of opportunity for this group. It is anticipated that those who identify as Irish speakers within this identity and living in the Gaeltacht Quarter, will be a positively impacted by the scheme. The outcome of the pilot scheme will better inform the levels of negative and positive impacts.

What is the level of impact? Potentially major positive.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: We do not know at this time how or in what ways dual language street signs will affect the equality of opportunity for this group. It is anticipated that those who identify as Irish speakers withing this identity and living in the Gaeltacht Quarter, will be a positively impacted by the scheme. The outcome of the pilot scheme will better inform the levels of negative and positive impacts.

What is the level of impact? Potentially major positive.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**: We do not know at this time how or in what ways dual language street signs will affect the equality of opportunity for this group. It is anticipated that those who identify as Irish speakers within this identity living in the Gaeltacht Quarter. will be a positively impacted by the scheme. The outcome of the pilot scheme will better inform the levels of negative and positive impacts. What is the level of impact? Potentially major positive.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**: We do not know at this time how or in what ways dual language street signs will affect the equality of opportunity for this group. It is anticipated that those who identify as Irish speakers within this identity and living in the Gaeltacht Quarter, will be a positively impacted by the scheme. The outcome of the pilot scheme will better inform the levels of negative and positive impacts.

What is the level of impact? Potentially major positive.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**: We do not know at this time how or in what ways dual language street signs will affect the equality of opportunity for this group. It is anticipated that those who identify as Irish speakers and living in the Gaeltacht Quarter, within this identity will be a positively impacted by the scheme. The outcome of the pilot scheme will better inform the levels of negative and positive impacts.

What is the level of impact? Potentially major positive.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**: We do not know at this time how or in what ways dual language street signs will affect the equality of opportunity for this group. It is anticipated that those who identify as Irish speakers and living in the Gaeltacht Quarter, within this identity will be a positively impacted by the scheme. The outcome of the pilot scheme will better inform the levels of negative and positive impacts.

What is the level of impact? Potentially major positive.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**: We do not know at this time how or in what ways dual language street signs will affect the equality of opportunity for this group. It is anticipated that those who identify as Irish speakers within this identity and living in the Gaeltacht Quarter, will be a positively impacted by the scheme. The outcome of the pilot scheme will better inform the levels of negative and positive impacts.

What is the level of impact? Potentially major positive.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**: We do not know at this time how or in what ways dual language street signs will affect the equality of opportunity for this group. It is anticipated that those who identify as Irish speakers within this identity and living in the Gaeltacht Quarter, will be a positively impacted by the scheme. The outcome of the pilot scheme will better inform the levels of negative and positive impacts.

What is the level of impact? Potentially major positive.

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

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

Religious Belief – While we do not know at this time if dual language traffic signs will better promote the equality of opportunity for this group it is anticipated that those who identify as Irish speakers within this identity, living in the Gaeltacht Quarter, will be positively impacted by this pilot scheme.

Political Opinion – As outlined above in religious belief.

Racial Group – As outlined above in religious belief.

Age – As outlined above in religious belief.

Marital Status – As outlined above in religious belief.

Sexual Orientation – As outlined above in religious belief.

Men and Women generally – As outlined above in religious belief.

Disability – As outlined above in religious belief.

Dependants - As outlined above in religious belief.

3. **To what extent is the policy 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**: In Northern Ireland, religion, political opinion and racial background have become interwoven, and polarised opinions and perceptions currently exist around the issue of dual language.

In Northern Ireland, religion, political opinion and racial background have become interwoven, and polarised opinions and perceptions currently exist around the issue of dual language.

Available data from the 2021 Census shows the use of Irish is most prominent among those who identify as Catholic or having been brought up in a Catholic background. The 2021 Census also highlights people of other religions as having some ability in Irish and there are also public examples of Irish language being adopted by people from a non-Catholic background.

We do not know at this time how or in what ways dual language traffic signs will affect the good relation between this group and others in this particular area. That said we have noted that depending on the names on the signage these can be defaced depending on the area for example defacement of other traffic signs displaying either Londonderry or Northern Ireland.

There has been no data identified to assess the likely impact on good relations between people of different religious beliefs.

What is the level of impact? Major positive impact for Irish speakers living within the area of the pilot scheme.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: As outlined above.

What is the level of impact? Major positive impact for Irish speakers living within the area of the pilot scheme.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: As outlined in religious belief.

What is the level of impact? Major positive impact for Irish speakers living within the area of the pilot scheme.

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:

Religious Belief – As this pilot scheme is confined to the Gaeltacht Quarter in West Belfast we do not know at this time if dual language street signs will better promote the good relations opportunities for this group.

Political Opinion - [As outlined above.](#)

Racial Group - [As outlined above.](#)

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?

(Every citizen belongs to more than one group - For example: disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

Each Section 75 identities combines to make society in general. Given the geographical area as well as the s75 identities this pilot scheme will potentially benefit those multiple identities who understand the Irish language living within the Belfast Gaeltacht area.

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

Part 3. Screening decision

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

The introduction of this pilot bi-lingual signage in the Belfast Gaeltacht area is designed to promote the use of the Irish language in that specific area in line with our commitments under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. This will benefit all Section 75 identities who have an understanding of and speak the Irish language throughout the Belfast Gaeltacht Quarter.

Consideration was given as to whether this would benefit from conducting a full EQIA. However, based on the anticipated positive impact in a recognised Irish medium area, the Department has made the decision that a full EQIA is not required.

The outcome of this pilot will inform any future policy development decision for bi-lingual signage that may likely require a full EQIA.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced - please provide details of this consideration.

N/A.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

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?

At this stage this is a pilot scheme for an Irish medium area only and as such mitigation is not required.

Any future policy development decision as a result of this pilot will consider mitigations if necessary.

If so, **give the reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

As previous comment.

Timetabling and prioritising

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.

Priority criterion [choose 1 2 or 3 if a full EQIA is to take place]

Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	Rating 3
Social need	Rating 1
Effect on people’s daily lives	Rating 2
Relevance to a public authority’s functions	Rating 1

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority’s Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

No

If yes, please provide details.

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities 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, 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.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by: [Stephen Hughes](#)
Position/Job Title: [PPTO/ Head of Engineering Policy](#)
Date: [22 November 2024](#)

Approved by: [David Porter](#)
Position/Job Title: [Director of Engineering](#)
Date: [20 February 2025](#)

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.

For Equality Team Completion:

Date Received: [25.02.25](#)
Amendments Requested: [Yes](#)
Date Returned to Business Area: [03.03.25](#)
Date Final Version ~~Received~~ / Agreed: [16.05.25](#)
Date Published on DfI's Section 75 webpage: [21.07.26](#)