

Child Rights Impact Assessment template

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STAGE 1: SCOPING (Background and Rights Framework)

Question 1: Name the measure / proposal being assessed and describe the overall aim

Social and Environmental Guidance for Water and Sewerage Services (2028/29-2032/33) ('The Guidance').

The draft Guidance contains policies set out in Sustainable Water - A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040), which was published in 2016. This principal aim of the guidance prepared by the Department for Infrastructure's Water and Drainage Policy Division is to provide the Utility Regulator (UR) for Northern Ireland with guidance on the key environmental and social policies it expects it to have regard to in carrying out its role in regulating the water industry during the 2028/29-2032/33 period. The guidance has been developed taking existing policies and legislative commitments into consideration and sets out the key strategic investment themes for NI Water for Price Control (PC) 28 which are environmental improvement and compliance; service delivery, improvement and affordability; and sustainability and climate change.

This Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) follows the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People's Office guidance as set out at NICCY CRIA Guidance. In addition to this CRIA, assessments/screening exercises have been completed to consider topics including Equality, Human Rights, Rural Needs and Regulatory Impacts.

Question 2: Which children's human rights instruments and articles are relevant to the measure / proposal?

Human Rights Instrument	Article	Further analysis on the expected / actual effect
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Guidance promotes several policies for which some articles may be relevant to varying degrees.	Article 3: The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all decisions and actions that affect children. Article 6: The right to survive and develop to their full potential. Article 12: The right for children to participate and express their views Article 24: Children have the right to the highest possible standard of health, including a healthy environment and clean water. Article 27: Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Article 29: Goals of education includes the aim to build a	To ensure that the best interests service users, including children, are reflected in the draft Guidance, DfI has actively collaborated with a range of different stakeholders including the Utility Regulator ('the Regulator') and the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (CCNI) in the development of the draft Guidance. As part of the overall consultation process, members of the public, including children and young people will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Guidance and on the related assessments, including this Children's Rights Assessment. This feedback will help to inform the final Guidance document. The Guidance promotes continued reliable access to safe drinking water through improved water quality, protecting and safeguarding our natural environment, maintaining supply resilience and capacity from source to tap and reducing pollution incidents. In so doing, the Guidance will help to improve the quality of life for children and young people, support children's survival, protect from waterborne diseases and lead to healthy development. The Guidance outlines that in performing its functions with respect to NI Water, the Regulator should seek to ensure efficient and affordable water services and protect service users in vulnerable and changing circumstances. The Guidance encourages long-term investment in water and sewerage infrastructure and services which are fit for purpose and can adequately serve current and future generations. Maintaining and improving reliable water services is a key element of providing an adequate standard of living for all service users, including children. Whilst the guidance is not intended as an educational document, it does provide an opportunity to educate children and young people on relevant issues in respect of water services and in so doing, encouraging a greater awareness and respect for the natural environment. Through the policies it promotes on

	child's respect for the natural environment.	measures to improve water quality, reduce pollution, protect biodiversity, address climate change and promote sustainable environmental management, the Guidance supports the creation of healthier natural environments which children can learn about, experience and value. Overall, the guidance is assessed as having an indirect but positive effect on the topics detailed above in relation to relevant Convention articles.
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Question 3: Which groups of children are most likely to be affected by the measure / proposal?		
Group of children	How are they likely to be affected?	How will you engage with them?
It is likely that there will be indirect positive impacts on all children regardless of their background or status.	The policies detailed in the guidance are of benefit to all service users in maintaining a clean, safe and sustainable supply of high-quality drinking water as well as better access to improved wastewater capacity and long-term sustainability through flood resilience and environmental performance. This guidance could lead to potential benefits such as: • Maintaining clean and safe drinking water. • Could provide a boost in land use development facilitated through improved wastewater capacity. • Improved environmental quality in rivers and catchments.	DfI has undertaken a stakeholder engagement exercise with a number of key stakeholders in the water sector to seek input on the draft guidance prior to the public consultation. The public consultation will provide an opportunity to identify any particular issues that may affect the rights of children and other service users and which may need to be considered in finalising the draft Guidance and related assessments.

Question 4: Which stakeholder groups should be engaged during the policy development process? (e.g., parents/carers, NGOs, unions, NICCY, academics, etc.)		
Stakeholder group	What can they contribute to the process?	How will you engage with them?
These groups of interested parties are likely to include: Utility Regulator NI Water Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) CCNI Local Councils Service users, including children and young people Other public sector organisations Businesses Voluntary and community organisations.	Different stakeholders will contribute different perspectives on the key policies detailed on the guidance based on their role and interaction with water services in the North. For service users, including children and young people, the consultation will provide an opportunity for the Department to ensure that their views and needs are factored into the Guidance for the Regulator.	All members of the public and stakeholder groups will have the opportunity to engage through the public consultation for the draft Guidance. Following the consultation all responses will be reviewed and analysed in order to inform the finalisation of the Guidance.

STAGE 2: CONTEXT AND COLLABORATION

Question 5: Which Programme for Government outcomes does this policy aim to impact on?	
PFG Outcome	Way in which the policy will have an impact
Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing Reform and Transformation of Public Services	The Guidance is expected to contribute most significantly to the PfG outcomes relating to environmental sustainability, health and wellbeing, infrastructure and community resilience. In particular, the guidance will, when it comes into effect, aim to assist the UR in its role of regulating NI Water, to facilitate it in prioritising appropriate action to enhance water quality, deliver a resilient and sustainable water supply, contribute to effective flood risk management and increase the provision of wastewater capacity to facilitate housing and development to contribute to economic growth without adversely impacting the environment. Potential positive impacts may include:- • Maintaining access to safe, high-quality drinking water supply that helps protect children's health and development; • Improved wastewater treatment and pollution reduction contributing to cleaner waterbodies and coastal waters, reducing environmental health risks; • Improved flood resilience which would reduce the risk of flooding to homes, schools and community facilities used by children and young people; • Increased wastewater capacity to facilitate the delivery of new housing developments, improving access to suitable housing for families with children; • Maintaining affordability to help ensure essential water and sewerage services remain accessible to families/children; and, • Promoting climate change mitigation and adaptation to support long-term environmental sustainability, benefiting children who will experience the greatest impacts of future climate change.

Question 6: Which Children and Young People's Strategy outcomes does this policy aim to impact on? Resource: CYPs

Children's Strategy Outcome	Way in which the policy will have an impact
Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy. Children and young people live in safety and stability. Children and young people learn and achieve Children and young people enjoy play and leisure. Children and young people experience economic and environmental wellbeing.	It is the aim of the Guidance that the policies it endorses will have a positive impact for all service users, including children. The policies promote maintaining access to safe, clean drinking water, supporting children's right to health and supporting them to develop and grow in education and recreation. The Guidance promotes measures to address flood risks and adapt to climate change, helping to protect children from environmental harm, while promoting sustainable development to encourage greater prosperity and economic growth.

Question 7: What opportunities are there to promote joined up outcomes for children? Resource: CSCA		
Department and policy area	Shared outcome / cross cutting issue	How will you engage with them? (eg joint working, keep informed, consultation, etc)
As this is Departmental guidance and involves approval at Executive level, it relies on cross departmental engagement before it is finalised and issued to the Regulator. In advance of the public consultation, DfI has engaged with the following key water stakeholders: - DAERA/NIEA; The Regulator; NI Water; and, CCNI	All programmes and policies are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity for all citizens, including children and young people.	Please refer to Question 4 above. DfI has undertaken a pre consultation stakeholder engagement exercise in which input/comments were sought from key stakeholders on the draft guidance which included cross-Departmental collaboration with DAERA. DfI proposes to undertake a public consultation process to provide an opportunity for a wider set of stakeholders, including service users, to provide their views on the draft Guidance.

STAGE 3: EVIDENCE GATHERING

Question 8: What quantitative evidence have you used to inform your assessment? What does it tell you?		
Evidence collected	Evidence source	Explanation of the importance
DfI has consulted with key water stakeholders to develop the guidance. As part of this engagement CCNI highlighted evidence from their May 2024 report ‘Consumer views on water’. The purpose of the report was to present the findings of quantitative survey data on consumer perspectives of NI Water based on policy priorities such as climate change issues relating to water and sewerage services, perception of NI Water’s service, confidence in long term water supply etc. An online quantitative survey of 1000 Northern Ireland (NI) residents was administered in December 2023. Quota controls based on official population estimates were employed throughout survey fieldwork and corrective RIM weighting was applied during data analysis to ensure that the final sample was representative of the NI population in terms of sex, age, socio-economic group (SEG) and region.	Consumer views on water Consumer Council research report May 2024	The Consumer Council research indicated that: • Consumers have high levels of trust in NI Water and regard the continued provision of safe, reliable drinking water as its highest priority; • Consumers expect NI Water to play a leading role in addressing environmental and climate change challenges and are generally willing to support these efforts through changes in their own behaviour; • Consumers indicated that they require more information and guidance on how to reduce water consumption and contribute to environmental improvements. The findings are significant in so far as they underpin and support the objectives of the guidance which will have potential benefits for children's rights through improved public health, environmental protection, climate resilience, community wellbeing and the sustainable management of water resources.

Question 9: What qualitative evidence have you used to inform your assessment? What does it tell you?		
Evidence collected	Evidence source	Explanation of the importance
DfI has consulted with key water stakeholders to develop the guidance. This process included gathering feedback from the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland which identified the key priorities of service users, as detailed above in response to Question 8. The policies in the guidance are taken from Sustainable Water - A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040). The Strategy was informed by research carried out by the Consumer Council in March 2012 and August 2014, to help identify customer's priorities for water and sewerage services. This research did not indicate any specific problem for Section 75 categories. In addition, an EQIA screening analysis and a public consultation report was carried out on Sustainable Water in 2014. A Consumer Measures / Satisfaction Working Group is in place, to ensure consumer priorities and measures remain central to the Guidance. The Guidance will be subject to public consultation which will provide a further opportunity to identify and consider any	Sustainable Water - A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040)	There is potential for positive impacts on children and young people where budget spend is maintained or increased and adverse impact where this is not the case. As mentioned in the response to Q3, the forthcoming public consultation exercise will help to inform the qualitative evidence base for the guidance document by providing all stakeholders with an opportunity to input to the guidance.

relevant issues affecting specific categories of service users.		
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Question 10: What key missing information / evidence would have been beneficial to your analysis?

This CRIA will be reviewed following the consultation process to include any updates related to feedback received on the issues detailed above.

Question 11: What existing evidence on children and young people views has been considered in the development of the proposal or measure?

Group of children	Source of Information	Please provide a brief description of process	What were the findings?
Children and Young People generally	Existing evidence was available in the research and surveys detailed above to help identify customer's priorities for water and sewerage services. This research did not indicate any specific problem for any particular group, including children and young people. Additionally, pre-consultation engagement was carried out with key water stakeholders to help inform the draft Guidance and relevant assessments.	As indicated opposite	As indicated opposite

Question 12: What groups of children and young people have been directly involved in developing the proposal or measure?

Groups involved	How were they involved?	What were the findings?
As mentioned in the response to Q4, a public consultation process will be held to provide all stakeholders, including	The consultation process has not yet been undertaken. Feedback from the consultation	The consultation process has not yet been undertaken. Feedback from the consultation process will inform the finalisation of the Guidance.

service users, to provide feedback on the draft Guidance.	process will inform the finalisation of the Guidance.	
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Question 13: What stakeholder groups have been engaged in developing/reviewing the proposal or measure?		
Stakeholder group	How were they involved?	What were the findings?
The Utility Regulator NI Water DAERA NIEA Consumer Council for Northern Ireland	Pre-consultation engagement was carried out with key water stakeholders to help inform the draft Guidance and relevant assessments.	Feedback from key stakeholders was taken into account in preparing the Guidance for public consultation.

STAGE 4: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

Complete questions 14-16 for each option being considered

Question 14: What impact will (or does) the proposal or measure have on children and young people's rights?		
Type of impact	Justification for Argument	likely or actual short/medium/long-term outcomes
Positive/neutral	It is not considered that the draft guidance is likely to or has the potential to contravene or violate child rights in any way. Rather, the draft guidance is more likely to promote and protect these rights due to the aim of the guidance and the fact it takes existing policies and legislative commitments into consideration regarding environmental improvement and compliance; service delivery, improvement and affordability; and sustainability and climate change.	Likely long term positive impact.

Question 15: Will there be (or are there) different impacts on different groups of children and young people?		
Group of children affected	Initial analysis of the positive impact on rights	Initial analysis of the negative impact on rights
It is anticipated that the impacts are anticipated to be positive for all service users, including children and young people.	See above response to Question 14.	Not applicable – no negative impact on rights identified.

Question 16: If a negative impact is identified for any area of rights or any group of children and young people, what options are there to modify the proposal or measure to mitigate the impact?	
Negative impact	What options are there to modify the measure(s) or mitigate the impact?
No negative impacts identified.	Not applicable – no negative impacts identified.

STAGE 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Question 17: In summary, what are your key findings on the impact of the measure or proposal on children and young people's rights?
This CRIA will be subject to review and will be updated following the conclusion of the public consultation process to factor in any issues identified regarding children's rights that need to be considered. At this stage, no negative impacts have been identified, with the Guidance expected to have a positive impact over the long term by providing clarity and highlighting key policies for the Utility Regulator to take into account in performing its functions and making its determination for the next Price Control period (2028/29 – 2032/33).