



Screening flowchart and template (taken from Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for public authorities 2010 (*Appendix 1*)).

Introduction

Part 1. Policy scoping – asks public authorities to provide details about the policy, procedure, practice and/or decision being screened and what available evidence you have gathered to help make an assessment of the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

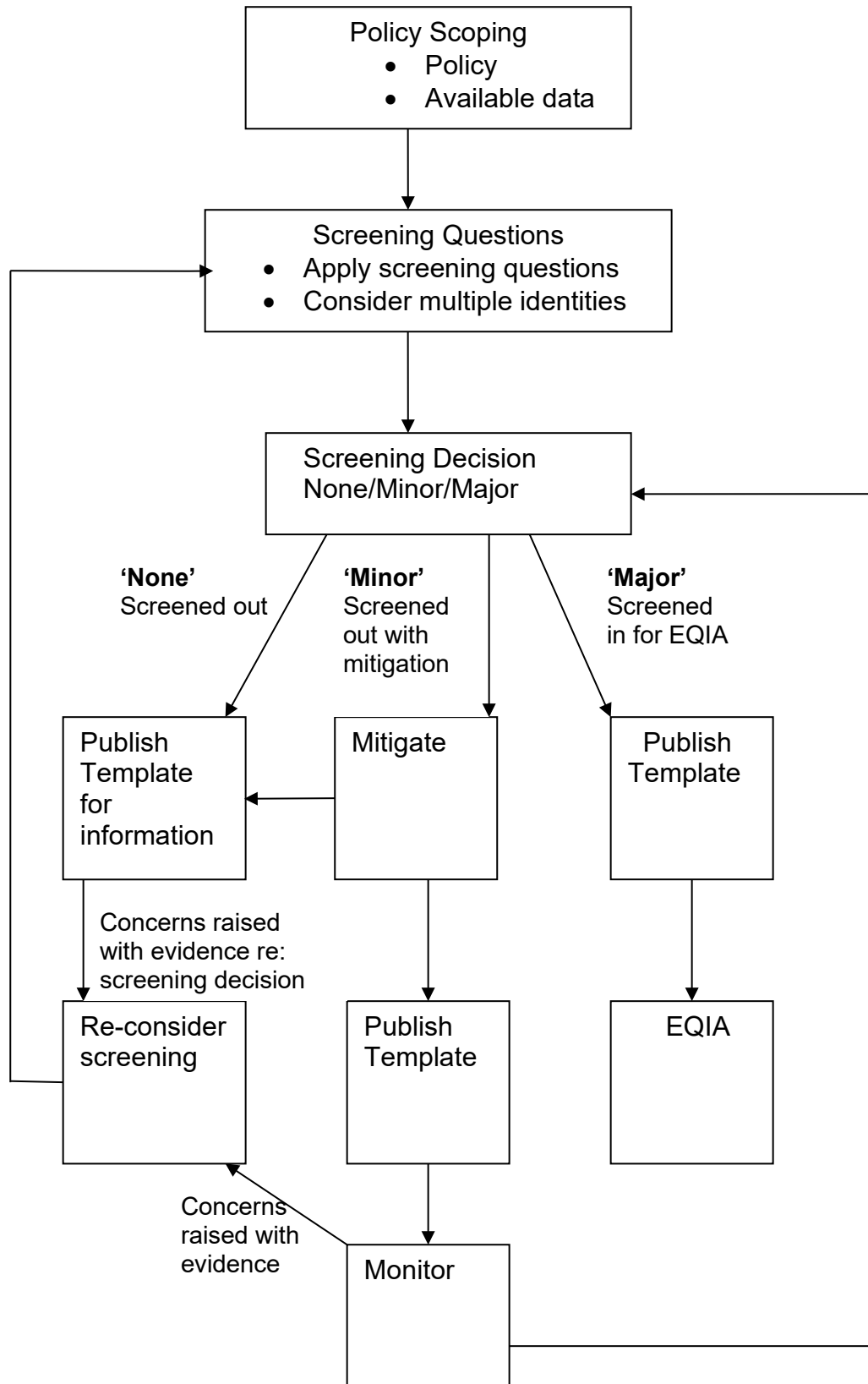
Part 2. Screening questions – asks about the extent of the likely impact of the policy on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories. Details of the groups consulted and the level of assessment of the likely impact. This includes consideration of multiple identity and good relations issues.

Part 3. Screening decision – guides the public authority to reach a screening decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA), or to introduce measures to mitigate the likely impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Part 4. Monitoring – provides guidance to public authorities on monitoring for adverse impact and broader monitoring.

Part 5. Approval and authorisation – verifies the public authority's approval of a screening decision by a senior manager responsible for the policy.

A screening flowchart is provided overleaf.



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

The Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, and Workhouses) Rules

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

This is an existing policy.

The Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, and Workhouses) Rules (the 'Rules') constitute new subordinate legislation which will be made under section 28 of the *Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill, once it receives Royal Assent*. They are being introduced to establish the detailed procedural framework governing the operation of the statutory Public Inquiry.

While the primary legislation provides the overarching legal basis for the establishment of the Inquiry, including its functions, powers and scope, the 'Rules' are necessary to set out the practical arrangements for how those functions will be carried out in practice. This includes procedural matters such as the handling and testing of evidence, participation in proceedings, the designation of core participants, and the conduct of hearings.

The 'Rules' represent a key operational component of the overall policy framework, enabling the Inquiry to function effectively, consistently and transparently. They provide clarity and certainty to all participants, including victims and survivors, legal representatives, and other stakeholders, regarding how the Inquiry will operate.

As this is new subordinate legislation, the 'Rules' do not amend or replace an existing framework but instead introduce a bespoke procedural regime specifically designed to support the unique context and objectives of this Inquiry.

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

The aim of the 'Rules' is to establish a clear and comprehensive procedural framework to support the effective operation of the statutory Public Inquiry into Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses.

The 'Rules' are intended to ensure that the Inquiry is conducted in a manner that is fair, transparent and consistent, by setting out detailed provisions governing how evidence is obtained, managed and assessed, how participants engage with the process, and how proceedings are conducted.

A key outcome is to facilitate meaningful participation by victims and survivors, including through the designation of core participants and the provision of appropriate procedural safeguards. The 'Rules' are designed to ensure that individuals are able to contribute their experiences in a way that is accessible, respectful and sensitive to the nature of the subject matter.

The 'Rules' also aim to support the efficient and orderly management of the Inquiry by providing clarity on roles, responsibilities and processes, including the conduct of hearings, decision-making by the chairperson, and the administration of documentation. This helps to ensure that the Inquiry can progress in a structured and timely manner.

In addition, the 'Rules' provide for the appropriate handling, retention and return of materials following the conclusion of the Inquiry, as well as arrangements for the payment of expenses or awards to witnesses, thereby supporting participation and ensuring proper administrative governance.

Overall, the intended outcome is to enable the Inquiry to operate effectively and to fulfil its overarching objective of establishing the facts, supporting truth recovery, and contributing to public understanding and accountability in relation to historical institutional practices.

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

The 'Rules' are expected to benefit a number of Section 75 groups, although the extent of benefit may vary depending on the historical context of the Inquiry and the profile of those affected.

The most significant benefit is likely to arise for women, as the Inquiry is focused primarily on Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries, which historically accommodated women and girls and were closely associated with gender-specific social practices. But will also encompass men as children born to women in Mother and Baby Institutions may have been of either gender. All will play a part within the Inquiry.

The 'Rules' aim to support participation by establishing clear procedures, enabling access to hearings, and facilitating the giving of evidence in a structured and supportive framework.

Older people are also expected to benefit, as many victims and survivors are from older or middle-aged cohorts. The 'Rules' provide for a range of participation methods, including written and remote evidence, which may assist those who may have mobility or health limitations.

Persons with disabilities may benefit through provisions that enable flexible participation and the use of appropriate adjustments, ensuring that individuals with physical, sensory or mental health needs are supported to engage effectively with the Inquiry process.

Individuals across all religious backgrounds may benefit from the opportunity to contribute to a process aimed at establishing facts and understanding historical experiences linked to institutions associated with different denominations. The structured and transparent framework provided by the 'Rules' also helps ensure that all participants are treated consistently and fairly.

While participation is open to all, the policy may also indirectly benefit dependants (such as children or spouses of deceased victims and survivors) by enabling them to engage with the Inquiry and contribute to, or access, outcomes relating to truth recovery and accountability.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Executive Office (TEO).

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The policy is owned by TEO. It will be implemented by the Truth Recovery Programme Team.

Implementation factors

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

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

☒ other public sector organisations

☒ voluntary/community/trade unions

☐ other, please specify _____

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- what are they?

The Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill.

- who owns them?

The Executive Office (TEO)

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](#).

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

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information
Religious belief	Evidence relating to religious background has been drawn primarily from the Queen's University Belfast / Ulster University (QUB/UU) research report on Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland (1922–1990), alongside data from the previous public consultation related to the Bill. The QUB/UU report outlines that the institutions examined operated across different religious affiliations. Of the institutions included in the research, a number were managed by Roman Catholic religious orders, while others were operated by Protestant or non-denominational organisations. The report also notes that a greater volume of evidence and testimony was available in relation to Catholic-run institutions. This is attributed, in part, to higher levels of public awareness and media focus on similar institutions in the Republic of Ireland. The report further indicates that individuals who experienced Protestant-operated institutions may have been less likely to come forward, potentially due to a perception that their experiences were less visible or less widely recognised. This suggests that participation levels in the Inquiry may differ by religious background. Data from the previous public consultation supports this finding. Of those who responded to the consultation and disclosed their religious background: • approximately 55% identified as having a Catholic background • approximately 18% identified as Protestant or other Christian • a smaller proportion identified as having another or no religion, or preferred not to say

	This evidence indicates that individuals from a Catholic community background may be more strongly represented among those engaging with the Inquiry. No evidence has been identified to suggest that the policy itself will differentiate in treatment based on religious belief. However, the available data highlights the potential for differential participation levels, which has been taken into account in assessing impacts and identifying appropriate mitigation measures, such as targeted outreach and inclusive communication strategies.
Political opinion	There is no available data on the political beliefs of those likely to be impacted by the policy. However, as political belief often aligns with religion in Northern Ireland, it is possible (but not definite) that the policy could have greater impact on those with Nationalist political beliefs.
Racial group	Limited direct data is available in relation to the racial or ethnic background of individuals who resided in Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries or Workhouses during the period under consideration (1922–1995). The Queen’s University Belfast / Ulster University (QUB/UU) report does not provide detailed analysis on race or ethnicity, reflecting the fact that such data was not routinely recorded at the time. Broader demographic evidence provides useful context. Historical census data indicates that the population of Northern Ireland during the relevant period was overwhelmingly of white ethnic background, with very small proportions of minority ethnic groups recorded. More recent data from the 2021 Census continues to show that the population remains predominantly white, although it is increasingly diverse. It is therefore likely that the majority of individuals participating in the Inquiry will be of white ethnicity. Evidence from the consultation held on the policy proposals for Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill supports this assumption. Of those who responded and disclosed their ethnicity, approximately 82% identified as white, with a small proportion identifying as being from mixed or other ethnic backgrounds, and a notable proportion preferring not to say. Evidence from comparable schemes in the Republic of Ireland (including the Oak Report) also indicates that a small minority of individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds reported experiences linked to race, including instances where their treatment may have been influenced by their ethnicity. While there is no evidence to suggest that the policy itself differentiates on the basis of racial group, the available data indicates that participation is likely to be predominantly from individuals of white ethnicity, reflecting historical population trends. The ‘Rules’ apply equally to all individuals regardless of race or ethnic background, and participation in the Inquiry will be open to all eligible persons.

	The lack of detailed historical data limits the ability to fully assess potential differential impacts for minority ethnic groups. This has been recognised in the screening, and the need for inclusive engagement and accessibility has been taken into account in the development of the policy.
Age	Evidence from a range of sources indicates that the population affected by Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses is predominantly from middle-aged to older age groups. The Queen's University Belfast / Ulster University (QUB/UU) report highlights that the institutions under consideration ceased operating at various points during the 20th century, with the last Mother and Baby Institutions closing in the early 1990s and Workhouses ceasing operation by 1948. As a result, individuals who experienced these institutions directly are now likely to be older adults, with many in later life. Evidence from the previous public consultation, related to the primary legislation, supports this profile. The majority of respondents were aged 55 and over, with the highest proportion falling within the 55–64 age group, followed by those aged 65–74 and over 75. This indicates that the core cohort of victims and survivors engaging with the policy is predominantly older. Additional supporting evidence from the Republic of Ireland, including the Oak Report and the Magdalen Commission (Quirke) Report, similarly identifies an older age profile among survivors, with average ages of participants significantly above the general population average. Census 2021 data on Census Day 2021 provides further demographic context on age in Northern Ireland. It indicates that 17.2% of the population are aged 65 and over, highlighting a significant and growing older age cohort within the population. The data also shows a comparatively smaller proportion of the population in younger age groups when set against older age bands, reflecting broader demographic trends of an ageing population. This is relevant as older age groups are more likely to experience long-term health conditions, reduced mobility, and increased support needs, which may affect their ability to engage with formal processes. This population-level evidence reinforces findings from research and consultation that individuals most likely to engage with the Inquiry are from older age cohorts and underlines the importance of ensuring that processes are accessible, flexible and responsive to age-related needs. COSICA consultation evidence further supports this position. Findings from the consultation on supports and services for victims and survivors of non-recent/historical institutional abuse indicate that the majority of respondents were aged 61–70, with substantial proportions also in the 71–80 age group.

	This reinforces the view that those directly affected are largely older individuals. Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) data also demonstrates a similar trend, reporting that approximately 53% of individuals accessing support services in 2024/25 were aged over 60. This data reflects the ongoing needs of an older cohort of victims and survivors, many of whom may require additional support to engage with processes such as an inquiry. While participation in the Inquiry will be open to individuals of all ages (including younger relatives of deceased victims and survivors), the available evidence indicates that older people are the primary group likely to engage directly with the Inquiry. This evidence has informed consideration of accessibility, participation methods and the need for flexible arrangements to ensure that individuals can engage effectively regardless of age-related needs.
Marital status	Although unmarried mothers formed a large part of those admitted to Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries, there will have been married women who were admitted due to other circumstances such as domestic abuse, substance dependency, poverty etc As well as this, those unmarried women may have gotten married in later life. Using marriage statistics from the general population estimate that around 72.6% of victim-survivors are likely to be married. There is no data available on the marital status of babies born in the relevant institutions, but this may also align with the general population. While no cohort-specific data is available for this group, the 'Rules' apply equally to all individuals regardless of marital status. Participation in the Inquiry and access to its processes will be open to all eligible persons without distinction based on marital status.
Sexual orientation	Information pertaining to the sexual orientation of women in Mother & Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries was not available but, as the focus on the report is on women who had babies in an institutional setting, it follows that many of the applicants will be heterosexual females. There is no data available on the sexual orientation of children born in relevant institutions or surviving children of deceased victim-survivors, but the 2021 Census found that 2.09% of the Northern Ireland population identify as LGBT so the applicant profile of children could mirror that. The 'Rules' apply equally to all individuals regardless of sexual orientation. Participation in the Inquiry and access to its processes will be open to all eligible persons without distinction.

Men and women generally	Evidence from a range of sources indicates that the experiences under investigation by the Inquiry relate primarily to women, particularly in the context of Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries, which were predominantly female-only settings. The Queen's University Belfast / Ulster University (QUB/UU) report highlights that these institutions were established within a historical context of gender-specific social norms, where women and girls, particularly those who were unmarried and pregnant, were subject to distinct forms of treatment and institutionalisation. As a result, it is expected that the majority of those directly affected, and therefore most likely to engage with the Inquiry will be women. Evidence from the previous public consultation supports this, with approximately 72% of respondents identifying as female, compared to a smaller proportion identifying as male. However, the scope of the Inquiry also includes children born in these institutions and individuals connected to them, meaning that men are also affected, particularly as sons of those who were resident in institutions or as relatives of deceased victims and survivors. In addition, Workhouses accommodated a wider population, including men, elderly individuals and families, meaning that some male experiences also fall within scope. The 'Rules' apply equally to all individuals regardless of gender. Participation in the Inquiry and access to its processes will be open to all eligible persons. However, the available evidence indicates that women are likely to be the primary beneficiaries of the policy, reflecting the historical context and focus of the Inquiry. This differential pattern reflects the intended purpose of the policy, which is to address historical experiences that disproportionately impacted women and girls, rather than any differential treatment arising from the operation of the 'Rules' themselves.
Disability	Evidence from a range of sources indicates that a significant proportion of individuals who experienced Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses have, or may have developed, long-term physical and mental health conditions, including recognised disabilities. The Queen's University Belfast / Ulster University (QUB/UU) report identifies that a number of women admitted to institutions had learning disabilities or mental health conditions, with some categorised as requiring "special care". The report also indicates that individuals were sometimes admitted due to families being unable to provide appropriate care, highlighting the vulnerability of some residents.

Evidence from comparable research in the Republic of Ireland, including the Magdalen Commission (Quirke) Report, found that a substantial proportion of respondents reported serious health issues, with many indicating reduced mobility or ongoing physical and psychological conditions.

COSICA consultation evidence further demonstrates the extent of health and disability-related needs among this cohort. Findings indicate that:

- approximately 68% of respondents reported poor or very poor mental health
- approximately 61% reported poor or very poor physical health
- approximately 52% identified as having a recognised disability

This highlights the prevalence of both physical and mental health conditions among victims and survivors of historical institutional experiences.

Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) data supports this, indicating that many individuals accessing support services experience multiple and complex health conditions, including chronic physical illnesses and long-term mental health impacts associated with trauma.

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:

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information
Religious belief	Evidence indicates that individuals affected by Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses may have differing experiences shaped by the religious context of the institutions in which they resided. The QUB/UU research highlights that institutions were operated by both Roman Catholic and Protestant organisations, and that levels of participation and visibility of experiences have differed between these groups. In particular, individuals from Protestant backgrounds may have been less likely to come forward, suggesting a potential need for more inclusive engagement. In the context of the 'Rules', these differences give rise to a number of needs and priorities: • ensuring that participation processes set out in the 'Rules' are accessible and inclusive for individuals from all religious backgrounds. • supporting fair and consistent procedures for the designation of core participants and the giving of evidence, regardless of background. • ensuring that processes for gathering and testing evidence are applied impartially and transparently. • recognising the need for outreach and communication approaches that encourage participation across communities. There may also be sensitivities regarding how evidence relating to religiously affiliated institutions is presented and considered. The procedural framework established by the 'Rules' therefore needs to support balanced and respectful handling of evidence, while maintaining objectivity. Overall, the 'Rules' are designed to apply equally to all participants. However, the evidence indicates that additional consideration may be

	required to ensure that participation is genuinely inclusive across religious groups, particularly where some groups may be less likely to engage.
Political opinion	No specific evidence has been identified to indicate that individuals affected by Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries or Workhouses had experiences that varied based on political opinion. Available research and consultation data do not record political affiliation as a relevant factor influencing admission, treatment, or experience within these institutions but in Northern Ireland it may overlap with religious/community background. As a result, no distinct or group-specific needs have been identified in relation to political opinion. However, given the sensitive and historically significant nature of the Inquiry, individuals from different political backgrounds may have a general expectation that the process is conducted in a manner that is independent, impartial and free from bias.
Racial group	Limited evidence is available in relation to the racial or ethnic background of individuals who resided in Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries or Workhouses, reflecting the fact that such data was not routinely recorded during the relevant period. Available research, including the QUB/UU report, does not identify race as a primary factor influencing admission or treatment within these institutions. However, broader demographic data indicates that the population of Northern Ireland during the relevant period was predominantly of white ethnic background. Evidence from consultation also suggests that participation in the Inquiry is likely to reflect this profile, with the majority of respondents identifying as white. A small proportion of individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds may have experienced additional or distinct challenges, including experiences linked to race or mixed ethnicity, as identified in comparable research. In the present context, no clear evidence suggests that individuals' current racial group gives rise to distinct or differential needs in relation to participation in the Inquiry and the development of the 'Rules'.
Age	Evidence indicates that the majority of individuals affected by Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses are from older age groups, with many now in later life. This reflects the historical timeframe of the institutions, which ceased operating during the 20th century. Research and consultation evidence, including the QUB/UU report, Truth Recovery Programme consultation, COSICA findings and VSS data, consistently demonstrate that participants are likely to be predominantly aged 55 and over, with a significant proportion aged 65 and above.

	In the context of the 'Rules', these differences give rise to a number of needs and priorities: • ensuring that participation processes set out in the 'Rules' are accessible and inclusive for individuals of all ages • supporting fair and consistent procedures for the designation of core participants and the giving of evidence, regardless of age • ensuring that processes for gathering and testing evidence are applied impartially and transparently whilst taking into account the age demographics.
Marital status	A large proportion of those admitted to Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries were unmarried mothers. This reflects the social norms and stigma associated with pregnancy outside of marriage during the relevant period. However, it is also recognised that individuals admitted to institutions came from a range of marital backgrounds, including those who were married, separated or widowed, and that individuals' marital status may have changed over time. In the present context, no clear evidence suggests that individuals' current marital status gives rise to distinct or differential needs in relation to participation in the Inquiry and the development of the 'Rules'.
Sexual orientation	There is limited evidence available in relation to the sexual orientation of individuals who resided in Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries or Workhouses, as this information was not routinely recorded during the relevant period. Available research, including the QUB/UU report and consultation evidence, does not identify sexual orientation as a factor influencing admission or treatment within these institutions. Given the historical context, it is likely that many of the women admitted to Mother and Baby Institutions were heterosexual, as the focus of these institutions was on pregnancy outside of marriage. However, it is recognised that individuals of all sexual orientations may have been affected, including those whose experiences were not identified or recorded at the time. In the present context, no clear evidence suggests that individuals' current sexual orientation gives rise to distinct or differential needs in relation to participation in the Inquiry and the development of the Rules.
Men and women generally	Evidence indicates that the experiences under investigation by the Inquiry relate primarily to women, particularly in the context of Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries, which were predominantly female-only settings. The QUB/UU research highlights that these institutions were shaped by historical social norms that disproportionately impacted women and girls, particularly those who were unmarried and pregnant.

	As a result, women are likely to represent the majority of participants in the Inquiry. Evidence from the previous consultation supports this, with a higher proportion of respondents identifying as female. This indicates that women may have distinct needs, including the need for recognition of gender-specific experiences, as well as a process that is sensitive to issues such as stigma, trauma and historical inequality. However, men are also affected, particularly as individuals born in institutions, as relatives of victims and survivors, or in the context of Workhouses, which accommodated a wider population including men. Their needs may include ensuring that their experiences are acknowledged within the overall scope of the Inquiry, and development of the Rules even where they are not the primary focus. In the present context, no clear evidence suggests that individuals' current gender gives rise to distinct or differential needs in relation to participation in the Inquiry and the development of the 'Rules'.
Disability	Evidence indicates that a significant proportion of individuals affected by Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses may have physical, sensory, or mental health conditions, including recognised disabilities. Research, including the QUB/UU report, identifies that some individuals admitted to institutions had learning disabilities or mental health conditions, while consultation evidence (COSICA and VSS) demonstrates that many victims and survivors continue to experience long-term and complex health needs, including poor mental and physical health. In the context of the 'Rules', these differences give rise to a number of needs and priorities: • ensuring that participation processes set out in the 'Rules' are accessible and inclusive for individuals including those who may have disabilities. • ensuring that processes for gathering and testing evidence are applied impartially and transparently whilst taking into account those who may have disabilities and their accessibility needs.
Dependants	Evidence indicates that, alongside individuals directly affected by Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses, dependants may also be impacted, particularly as children, spouses, or relatives of victims and survivors. This includes individuals born in institutions, as well as family members of those who are now deceased. While there is limited specific data on dependants as a distinct group, consultation evidence and the broader policy framework suggest that they

	may have particular needs in relation to participation, representation and recognition of experiences connected to their family members.
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Part 2. Screening questions

Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the questions 1-4 which are given on pages 66-68 of this Guide.

If the public authority's conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the public authority may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, a public authority should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the public authority's conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the public authority's conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of a 'major' impact

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;

- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

In favour of 'minor' impact

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of none

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

Screening questions

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

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Religious belief	The 'Rules' establish the procedural framework for participation, evidence gathering and decision-making within the Inquiry. The 'Rules' apply equally to all individuals regardless of religious belief and do not contain provisions that differentiate between groups. However, evidence indicates that individuals from Catholic backgrounds may be more strongly represented among participants, reflecting the historical prevalence and visibility of Catholic-run institutions. There is also some evidence that individuals from Protestant backgrounds may be less likely to engage, potentially due to lower levels of awareness or perceived relevance. In this context, the 'Rules' support equality of opportunity by: • providing clear and consistent procedures for all participants. • ensuring fair and impartial treatment in the handling of evidence and designation of core participants. • enabling accessible methods of participation regardless of background. While the 'Rules' themselves are neutral, there is a need to ensure that outreach and engagement processes (outside the 'Rules') encourage participation across all religious groups to avoid underrepresentation.	Minor The impact is considered minor as the 'Rules' apply uniformly and do not disadvantage any group. Any differential effect is likely to arise from external factors (e.g. participation levels) rather than the operation of the 'Rules' themselves.
Political opinion	The 'Rules' set out the procedural framework governing participation, evidence gathering and decision-making within the Inquiry. The 'Rules'	None The impact is considered none as the 'Rules' are

	apply equally to all individuals regardless of political opinion and do not contain any provisions that distinguish between individuals based on political background or affiliation. There is no evidence to suggest that individuals affected by the institutions experienced differential treatment based on political opinion, and no data indicates that political affiliation influences participation in the Inquiry. In this context, the 'Rules' support equality of opportunity by: • ensuring consistent and transparent procedures for all participants. • providing impartial mechanisms for the handling of evidence and conduct of hearings. • maintaining fair and objective decision-making processes. The neutrality of the 'Rules' is particularly important given the sensitive nature of the Inquiry, ensuring confidence among participants that the process is conducted independently and without bias.	fully neutral in their application and there is no evidence of differential needs or outcomes in relation to political opinion.
Racial group	The 'Rules' establish the procedural framework for participation, evidence gathering and decision-making within the Inquiry. The 'Rules' apply equally to all individuals regardless of racial or ethnic background and do not include provisions that differentiate between groups. Available evidence indicates that participation in the Inquiry is likely to be predominantly from individuals of white ethnicity, reflecting historical population demographics at the time the institutions operated. There is limited evidence relating specifically to minority ethnic groups; however, research from comparable contexts suggests that some individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds may have experienced additional or distinct challenges,	None The impact is considered none as the 'Rules' apply uniformly and do not disadvantage any racial group. Any differential impact is likely to arise from participation patterns rather than the operation of the 'Rules' themselves

	including issues linked to race or mixed ethnicity. In this context, the 'Rules' support equality of opportunity by: • ensuring consistent and transparent procedures for all participants regardless of racial group. • providing equal access to processes for giving evidence and participating in hearings. • maintaining fair and impartial decision-making across all cases.	
Age	The 'Rules' establish the procedural framework for participation, evidence gathering and conduct of hearings within the Inquiry. The 'Rules' apply equally to individuals of all ages and do not contain provisions that directly differentiate between age groups. However, evidence indicates that those most likely to engage with the Inquiry are from older age cohorts, particularly individuals aged 55 and over. This reflects the historical timeframe of the institutions under investigation. Supporting evidence from consultation, research and NISRA data shows that older individuals are more likely to experience health conditions, reduced mobility, and other accessibility needs, which may affect how they are able to participate. In this context, the 'Rules' have a positive role in supporting equality of opportunity by: • enabling flexible methods of participation, including written statements and remote engagement. • allowing for procedural discretion by the Chairperson to manage hearings in a fair and proportionate way.	Minor The impact is considered minor as the 'Rules' apply uniformly and do not disadvantage any age group. However, given the older profile of participants, there is a need to ensure that the application of the Rules supports accessibility and participation for older individuals.

	• supporting the fair and consistent treatment of all participants, regardless of age. While the 'Rules' themselves are neutral, older participants may require additional supports or adjustments to engage effectively. These needs are not created by the 'Rules' but highlight the importance of ensuring that procedures are applied in a way that is accessible and responsive to an older cohort.	
Marital status	The 'Rules' establish the procedural framework for participation, evidence gathering and conduct of hearings within the Inquiry. The 'Rules' apply equally to all individuals regardless of marital status and do not include provisions that distinguish between individuals based on whether they are single, married, divorced or widowed. Evidence indicates that marital status was a significant factor in the historical context of the institutions, with unmarried mothers forming a large proportion of those admitted. However, in the present context, marital status is not a determining factor in how individuals will engage with the Inquiry. In this context, the 'Rules' support equality of opportunity by: • ensuring consistent and impartial processes for all participants. • providing equal access to participation, including for spouses or family members of deceased victims and survivors. • enabling fair procedures for the submission and consideration of evidence, regardless of personal circumstances.	None The impact is considered none as the 'Rules' apply uniformly and there is no evidence of differential need or outcome associated with marital status in the operation of the policy.

Sexual orientation	The 'Rules' establish the procedural framework for participation, evidence gathering and conduct of hearings within the Inquiry. The 'Rules' apply equally to all individuals regardless of sexual orientation and do not contain provisions that distinguish between individuals on this basis. There is limited evidence available in relation to the sexual orientation of individuals who resided in the institutions, as this information was not routinely recorded during the relevant period. As a result, no specific pattern of need or differential experience has been identified for this group. In this context, the 'Rules' support equality of opportunity by: • ensuring consistent and impartial procedures for all participants • providing equal access to participation, including giving evidence and engaging with the Inquiry process • maintaining fair and transparent decision-making Given the sensitive nature of the Inquiry, it is important that procedures are applied in a way that ensures individuals feel respected, safe and able to participate openly, particularly where evidence may relate to personal or sensitive matters.	None The impact is considered none as the 'Rules' are neutral in their application and there is no evidence to suggest differential need or outcome in relation to sexual orientation.
Men and women generally	The 'Rules' set out the procedural framework for participation, evidence gathering and decision-making within the Inquiry. The 'Rules' apply equally to all individuals regardless of gender and do not contain provisions that directly differentiate between men and women. However, evidence indicates that the historical experiences under investigation relate primarily to women, particularly in the context of Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene	Minor The impact is considered minor as the 'Rules' apply uniformly and do not create differential outcomes based on an individual's gender. However, the policy may benefit women more than men as its purpose is to

	Laundries, which were predominantly female environments shaped by gender-specific social norms. As a result, women are likely to form a large majority of participants engaging with the Inquiry. However, men are also affected, particularly as individuals born in institutions or as relatives of victims and survivors, and their participation is facilitated through the same procedural framework. In this context, the 'Rules' support equality of opportunity by: • ensuring consistent and impartial procedures for all participants. • enabling equal access to participation and evidence submission. • supporting fair and transparent decision-making processes. While the 'Rules' are neutral in application, the policy operates within a context where women are disproportionately affected by the issues under investigation. This does not arise from the 'Rules' themselves, but from the historical basis of the Inquiry.	address historical disadvantage.
Disability	The 'Rules' establish the procedural framework for participation, evidence gathering and conduct of hearings within the Inquiry. The 'Rules' will apply equally to all individuals regardless of whether they may have a recognised disability and do not include provisions that differentiate between individuals on this basis. However, evidence from QUB/UU, COSICA and VSS indicates that a significant proportion of those affected by the institutions may have long-term physical or mental health conditions, including recognised disabilities. NISRA data further highlights that disability prevalence	Minor The impact is considered minor as the 'Rules' apply uniformly and do not create differential outcomes based on whether individuals have a disability but evidence indicates those affected by the institutions may have long-term physical or mental health conditions.

	increases with age, which is relevant given the older age profile of likely participants. In this context, the 'Rules' support equality of opportunity by: • allowing for flexible methods of participation, including written and remote evidence. • enabling procedural discretion for the Chairperson to manage hearings fairly and accessibility of venue etc. • providing a framework that can be applied in a way that supports accessibility and reasonable adjustments if required.	
Dependants	The 'Rules' establish the procedural framework for participation, evidence gathering and decision-making within the Inquiry. The 'Rules' apply equally to all individuals, including those with and without dependants, and do not include provisions that differentiate on this basis. Evidence indicates that dependants, particularly children, spouses, or relatives of victims and survivors, may be indirectly affected by the issues under investigation. This includes individuals born in institutions, as well as family members of those who are now deceased. In the context of the 'Rules', equality of opportunity is supported by: • enabling participation by relatives or representatives, including where individuals may be acting on behalf of a deceased person • providing clear and consistent procedures for the submission of evidence, regardless of personal circumstances.	None The impact is considered none as the 'Rules' apply uniformly and do not create differential outcomes based on whether individuals have dependants. Any potential barriers relate to external personal circumstances rather than the operation of the policy.

	ensuring that all participants are treated fairly and impartially, irrespective of whether they have dependants While the 'Rules' themselves are neutral, some participants may have caring responsibilities, which could affect their ability to engage fully with Inquiry processes such as attending hearings or providing evidence. These challenges arise from individual circumstances rather than the 'Rules' themselves but highlight the importance of flexible participation options.	
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2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories? Yes/No

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Religious belief	The Rules are neutral and apply equally to all individuals regardless of religious belief.	Minor
Political opinion	The policy is neutral and applies equally to all individuals regardless of political opinion.	None
Racial group	The Rules are neutral and apply equally to all individuals regardless of racial group.	None
Age	Opportunities exist to support older participants through accessible formats, flexible participation methods and appropriate support.	Minor
Marital status	The Rules apply equally regardless of marital status and do not present specific opportunities in this area.	None
Sexual orientation	The Rules are neutral and do not identify differential needs or opportunities specific to this category.	None
Men and women generally	The Rules apply equally regardless of gender and do not present specific opportunities in this area.	Minor
Disability	The Rules apply equally to individuals who may have a disability.	Minor

Dependants	The Rules apply equally and no specific opportunities beyond general accessibility and flexibility have been identified.	None
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3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good Relations Category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Religious belief		None
Political opinion		None
Racial group		None

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

Good Relations Category	Details	Major, minor, none
Religious belief	The findings and conclusions of the Inquiry may contribute to a shared understanding of historic experiences and foster a sense of acknowledgement and justice among victims and survivors from different religious backgrounds. The transparent and impartial procedures established by the 'Rules' support confidence in the fairness of the process.	Minor positive impact
Political opinion	The 'Rules' apply equally to all individuals and are designed to ensure impartial and consistent procedures. The findings and conclusions of the Inquiry may contribute to a shared understanding of historic experiences and foster a sense of acknowledgement	Minor positive impact

	and justice among victims and survivors from different political backgrounds.	
Racial group	The 'Rules' are neutral in their application and ensure equal access to participation and evidence processes regardless of racial or ethnic background. There is no evidence to suggest that the 'Rules' will impact on relations between individuals from different racial groups.	None

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?

There are potential positive impacts for those who fall into more than one Section 75 category, such as elderly females with health conditions, but this policy is not expected to negatively impact people with multiple identities. As recorded, accessible measures will be put in place to enable full access to the Inquiry for those who have a disability.

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 screening exercise has concluded that the 'Rules' will not have a significant adverse or differential impact on equality of opportunity across any of the Section 75 categories.

The 'Rules' set out a procedural framework governing the conduct of the Inquiry, including arrangements for participation, the handling of evidence, and the management of proceedings.

These provisions apply equally to all individuals and do not create differential treatment on the basis of any Section 75 characteristic.

While some categories (such as age) may experience minor differential patterns of participation, these arise from the profile of individuals affected by the historical context of the Inquiry, rather than from the operation of the 'Rules' themselves. The 'Rules' are designed to be neutral, transparent and consistently applied, ensuring fairness for all participants.

Any potential barriers to participation have been identified as operational or contextual rather than inherent to the policy. Appropriate measures to address these (e.g. accessibility, outreach, and support arrangements) can be implemented without requiring a full Equality Impact Assessment.

On this basis, the policy is considered to have no significant impact on equality of opportunity, and it is therefore appropriate to screen the policy out, subject to ongoing monitoring.

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.

While the screening has concluded that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required, a number of mitigation measures will be implemented to ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted in the application of the 'Rules'.

The 'Rules' themselves are procedural and apply equally to all individuals. However, recognising that certain groups (including older people and persons with disabilities) may experience barriers to participation, the following mitigating actions will be taken:

- ensuring accessible formats are available for all documentation and communications
- providing flexible participation options, including written submissions and remote engagement (availability of 'live link' facilities)
- implementing appropriate outreach and communication strategies to encourage participation across all communities including highlighting the Protestant institutions in communication strategy and targeted outreach campaign in Protestant communities.

- ensuring the Inquiry operates in a trauma-informed and sensitive manner, recognising the experiences of participants
- making provision for reasonable adjustments to support individuals with disabilities or additional needs

These measures will ensure that any potential impacts are appropriately addressed, without the need for a full EQIA.

No alternative policy options have been identified, as the procedural nature of the 'Rules' represents a proportionate and necessary framework to support the operation of the Inquiry.

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

N/A

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?

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

Section 75 Category	Potential Adverse Impacts	Mitigation
Religious belief	Women from Protestant backgrounds may be under-represented.	• Highlight the Protestant institutions in communication strategy. • Targeted outreach campaign in Protestant communities.
	Religious representatives may feel that they are unfairly blamed for societal prejudices of the time.	• Inquiry to consider the institutions within their historical and societal context. • Procedural fairness and impartiality as the cornerstone of all the Inquiry’s operations.
Age	Older age groups may find it more difficult to access the Inquiry	• Submission of written testimony. • Digital online testimony and participation. • Inquiry premises will take into account accessibility needs of participants.

Section 75 Category	Potential Adverse Impacts	Mitigation
	The possibility that a victim and survivor could pass away before the inquiry opens	• Relatives of those who are deceased may provide evidence to the Inquiry to share their relatives' experiences. • Newspaper, radio, and television advertisements. Flyers made available in community centres, GP surgeries and day centres to reach all.
Disability	Victims and survivors could be re-traumatised through telling their experience.	• Support from Victim and Survivor Service. • Trauma-informed practice developed through training. This will ensure staff are aware of the impact of trauma and place the needs of victims and survivors at the centre of all procedures and processes. • It is proposed that victims and survivors will be able to avail themselves of on-site counselling if attending the Inquiry alongside the Victim and Survivor Services offered. • All inquiry staff will undergo trauma informed training. • Statements given to the Inquiry could potentially be used again (or at least form a base) for the Individually Assessed Payment application (with consent).

Section 75 Category	Potential Adverse Impacts	Mitigation
	Those with disabilities may find it harder to access the Inquiry.	In relation to inquiry: • Entrance/ lift accessibility for wheelchair users • Access to toilet facilities for wheelchair users • Quiet/ breakout rooms. • Facilitation of 'live link' or other special measures as required. • Tailoring of information leaflets for those with sight difficulties. • Provision of Easy Read documents for the inquiry i.e. protocols, evidence, and procedure documents etc. • We are committed to making the Inquiry accessible, in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Website and Mobile Applications).

Alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.

The Inquiry will be conducted in a manner consistent with a human rights-based approach. This emphasises the importance of Non-Discrimination as well as Participation, Accountability, Empowerment and Legality. This means assisting those in the most vulnerable situations to overcome any barriers to realising their rights, as well as avoiding or addressing any form of discrimination.

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	Rating (1-3)
N/A	

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?

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: Alex Parry

Position/Job Title: Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, and Workhouses Inquiry, Truth Recovery Programme

Date: 26/08/2026

Approved by: James Gillan

Position/Job Title: Grade 6 – Truth Recovery Programme

Date: 26/08/2026

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.