



# Equality Screening Template

## **Code of Conduct**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Commission has a statutory duty to screen all draft policies to determine the potential level of impact in terms of the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.
- 1.2. In line with our Equality Scheme, each screening template is published on our website ([www.cvsni.org](http://www.cvsni.org)) and a quarterly screening report is circulated to consultees highlighting the findings of recent screening exercises.
- 1.3. This screening template follows the format recommended by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in the Section 75 guidance to public authorities (published in 2008). It comprises five elements:
  - Policy scoping
  - Screening questions
  - Screening decision
  - Monitoring
  - Approval and authorisation

## 2. Comments and queries

- 2.1. Any comments or queries in relation to this screening template should be addressed to:

Head of Corporate Services  
Commission for Victims and Survivors  
Equality House  
7-9 Shaftesbury Square  
Belfast  
BT2 7DP

Email: [commission@cvsni.org](mailto:commission@cvsni.org)  
Tel. 028 9031 1000

### Access to information

This document has been developed in Arial 12 point with 1.25 spacing. As part of our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, we want to ensure that everyone is able to access the documents we produce. This document can therefore be made available in alternative formats on request.

### **3. Policy scoping**

3.1. This section provides details about the policy being screened and what available evidence has been gathered to help make an assessment of the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

#### **Information about the policy**

3.2. The policy under consideration is the Code of Conduct Policy which sets out:

- the duties and responsibilities of staff in relation to discharging public functions in accordance with the law, recognising ethical standards, acting honestly and impartially and not taking part in any political or public activity which might compromise their impartial service to the Commission;
- staff accountability in terms of implementing all relevant policies and procedures;
- identifying and dealing appropriately with conflicts of interest;
- acting with integrity;
- acting appropriately when dealing with members of the public;
- using resources effectively;
- maintaining confidentiality;
- ensuring every member of staff is aware that inappropriate behaviour both within the workplace and at other venues during work-related social events can lead to complaints from staff of harassment or bullying.

3.3. The Code of Conduct also includes the Commission's Dress Code Policy and a procedure for staff to follow if they have concerns about improper conduct.

3.4. The Commission has developed this policy taking account of guidance published by, among others, the Information Commissioner's Office and the Office of the NI Ombudsman. The policy also takes account of good practice examples, including the policies of the NI Civil Service.

3.5. The policy will benefit people in all Section 75 categories.

## **Objectives of the policy**

- 3.6. The objective of the policy is to ensure that members of staff are aware of their duties and responsibilities when acting on behalf of the Commission.
- 3.7. The policy encourages any member of staff who believes that they are being required to act in a way which breaches the Code to raise the matter in accordance with the complaints procedure. It also encourages staff to use the complaints procedure to draw attention to cases where they believe there is evidence of improper behaviour elsewhere in the organisation but where they have not been personally involved.
- 3.8. The complaints procedure ensures that:
- any member of staff who wishes to make a complaint or draw attention to a perceived problem is able to do so;
  - all complaints are addressed within an appropriate time frame;
  - complainants are kept informed of the progress of any investigation;
  - complainants are provided with a written report outlining the findings of the investigation, the conclusions and any proposed action;
  - the procedure is fair and appropriate.

## **Implementation factors**

- 3.9. The policy does not supersede or diminish in any way the rights which employees may have to pursue a complaint through the Office of the Ombudsman for NI or take other legal action. However, the law requires internal procedures to be exhausted before complaints are pursued outside the organisation.
- 3.10. The Commission is committed to making adequate resources available to fulfill the aims of the policy.

## **Main stakeholders affected**

- 3.11. The policy will impact upon staff, including all full time and part time employees, temporary employees, agency staff, student placements and volunteers.

## **Available evidence**

- 3.12. Evidence has been gathered to inform this policy from the following sources:

- best practice examples of codes of conduct, including those of the NI Civil Service;
- fair employment monitoring data on the composition of the Commission workforce.

#### 4. Needs, experiences and priorities

S75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious belief	<p>The Commission has a very small workforce. Fair employment monitoring shows that, at 1 January 2017, there were 11 staff in post. 8 staff came from a Protestant community background, 2 from a Roman Catholic community background and 1 whose community background could not be determined.</p> <p>It is essential that both main communities are satisfied that complaints about alleged improper behavior will be dealt with objectively and without prejudice. The Code of Conduct complaints procedure includes a safeguard in the form of a second stage review by the Secretary of the Commission or the Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.</p> <p>The Code of Conduct includes a Dress Code which specifically allows for the consideration of any religious dress requirements. The Code of Conduct will ensure that staff will raise such issues with their Line Manager.</p>
Political opinion	<p>The Code of Conduct imposes a duty on staff not to take part in any political activity which compromises, or might be seen to compromise, their impartial service to the Commission. This requires a subjective decision on whether any particular activity might appear to compromise this position. It does not impose a blanket ban on political activity – for example, in terms of membership of a political party – but allows Line Managers to take a common sense approach to each situation on its own merits. The Code of Conduct ensures that staff will raise such issues with their Line Manager.</p>

Racial group	<p>Good practice dictates that the Commission should take into account the needs of people for whom English is not their first language. The complaints procedure requires the complaint to be submitted in writing but the Commission would accept a verbal complaint if the member of staff had difficulty providing a written version.</p> <p>The Code of Conduct includes a Dress Code which specifically allows for the consideration of any cultural dress requirements. The Code of Conduct will ensure that staff will raise such issues with their Line Manager.</p>
Age	No specific needs.
Marital status	No specific needs.
Sexual orientation	No specific needs.
Men and women generally	Fair employment monitoring shows that, at 1 January 2017, there were 11 staff in post - 6 staff were female and 5 male. It is not anticipated that men and women will have different needs in relation to the Code of Conduct.
Disability	<p>Good practice dictates that the Commission should take into account the needs of disabled people in relation to both the complaints procedure (where the disability affects the person's ability to communicate) and the Dress Code. The complaints procedure requires the complaint to be submitted in writing but the Commission would accept a verbal complaint if the member of staff had difficulty providing a written version.</p> <p>The Dress Code may be relaxed for a person with a disability or long term illness which results in specific requirements in terms of clothing – for example, the wearing of trainers by someone recovering from a foot injury. The Code of Conduct will ensure that staff will raise such issues with their Line Manager.</p>

Dependants	No specific needs.
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## 5. Screening questions

5.1. This section considers the extent of the likely impact of the policy on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories in relation to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. The analysis relates to four specific screening questions and includes an assessment of the level of the likely impact.

### Impact on equality of opportunity

5.2. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?  
minor/major/none

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Religious belief	The Dress Code allows for the consideration of any religious dress requirements. This will ensure that staff will raise such issues with their Line Manager.	Minor
Political opinion	The Code of Conduct imposes a duty on staff not to take part in any political activity which compromises, or might be seen to compromise, their impartial service to the Commission. This is not a blanket ban but ensures that staff will raise such issues with their Line Manger.	Minor
Racial group	The Dress Code allows for the consideration of any cultural dress requirements. This will ensure that staff will raise such issues with their Line Manager.  The complaints procedure requires the complaint to be submitted in writing but the Commission would accept a verbal complaint if the member of staff had difficulty providing	Minor  Minor

	a written version because of language difficulties.	
Age		None
Marital status		None
Sexual orientation		None
Men and women generally		None
Disability	<p>The complaints procedure requires the complaint to be submitted in writing but the Commission would accept a verbal complaint if the member of staff had difficulty providing a written version because their disability affected their ability to do so. The Commission has a very small workforce and it is anticipated that any member of staff who has difficulty making a complaint would be assisted to do so.</p> <p>The Dress Code may be relaxed for a person with a disability or long term illness which results in specific requirements in terms of clothing. The Code of Conduct will ensure that staff will raise such issues with their Line Manager.</p>	<p>Minor</p> <p>Minor</p>
Dependants		None

### Opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity

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

Section 75 category	If <b>Yes</b> , provide details	If <b>No</b> , provide reasons
All	The Commission will monitor all requests and complaints under the Code of Conduct in both quantitative and qualitative terms. This information may be used to identify opportunities to further promote equality of opportunity in the future.	

### Impact on good relations

5.4. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?  
minor/major/none

Good relations category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
All	None	None

### Opportunities to better promote good relations

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

Good relations category	If <b>Yes</b> , provide details	If <b>No</b> , provide reasons
All		The policy is designed to address the needs of individuals and will have no specific impact on the promotion of good relations.

## **6. Screening decision**

- 6.1. The screening process has identified that the policy has the potential to have a minor adverse impact on people of different religious beliefs, political opinions and racial groups and those with a disability.
- 6.2. In most cases, the adverse impact involves the staff member raising an issue with their Line Manager and discussing the most appropriate course of action, which the Commission considers is a reasonable approach.
- 6.3. The Commission has a very small workforce and it is anticipated that any member of staff who has difficulty making a complaint would be assisted to do so. The policy allows for the complainant to be accompanied by a Trade Union official, other employee or friend during meetings relating to the investigation of the complaint. The policy also provides information on where to obtain advice from external organisations once the internal procedure has been exhausted.
- 6.4. The Commission therefore does not consider that it would be beneficial to carry out an equality impact assessment.
- 6.5. As the policy has been developed in line with best practice examples, including the policies of the NI Civil Service, the Commission considers that all relevant issues have been taken into consideration and that no further mitigating actions are necessary at this time.

## **7. Monitoring**

- 7.1. The Commission will monitor all requests and complaints under the Code of Conduct in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Full written records will be kept of complaints received, investigations undertaken and conclusions reached. This information may be used to identify further opportunities to promote equality of opportunity. All information will be handled appropriately in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

## 8. Authorisation and approval

<b>Screened by:</b>	<b>Position/Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Craig Gartley	Head of Corporate Services	10/02/17
<b>Approved by:</b>		
John Beggs	Secretary to the Commission	13/02/17

Note: A copy of this Screening Template will be made easily accessible on the Commission's website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.