

Equality and Human Rights Screening

HSC Management of Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure

The Children's Court Guardian Agency for NI is required to address the 4 questions below in relation to all its policies. This template sets out a proforma to document consideration of each question.

1. 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)
2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?
3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?
(minor/major/none)
4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

As part of the audit trail documentation needs to be made available for all policies and decisions examined for equality and human rights implications. The screening template is a pro forma to document consideration of each screening question.

For information (evidence, data, research etc.) on the Section 75 equality groups see the Equality and Human Rights Information Bank on the BSO website: [Equality Screening - Business Services Organisation \(BSO\) Website](#)

1. INFORMATION ABOUT THE POLICY OR DECISION

1.1 Title of policy or decision

HSC Management of Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure

1.2 Description of policy or decision:

- **What is it trying to achieve (aims and objectives)?**

Health & Social Care Northern Ireland (HSCNI) is committed to providing safe, effective and high-quality service to patients and service users, and recognises its duty to support the employees delivering that service by providing a working environment that is conducive to positive health and wellbeing. There are many reasons why someone may experience a decline / deterioration in their physical, mental, or emotional health during their working lives. HSCNI is committed to providing a range of health & wellbeing initiatives, resources, and services, to support all staff to be well at work, and to return to work as soon as feasible where a period of absence is required.

This Policy is aimed at providing a framework for all HSCNI organisations to ensure that where sickness absence does occur, it is managed in a fair, prompt, and compassionate manner based on the individual circumstances of each employee.

HSCNI is committed to provide necessary and appropriate supports to help employees sustain regular and effective attendance at work, thus helping ensure that patients and service users get the best possible quality of care.

- **How will this be achieved (key elements)?**

The key purpose of this formal procedure is to provide the steps to be followed to ensure ongoing review of an employee's sickness

absence, provide management support to the employee to assist them in achieving the expected level of attendance, and facilitate their early return to work in circumstances where this is possible.

If, following all appropriate support being provided, an employee remains unfit to return to their role or they are unable to sustain the required level of attendance, this formal procedure also provides a range of alternative options to be explored with the employee regarding their future employment including redeployment, ill health retirement etc. In circumstances where all alternative options have been exhausted and there is no alternative but to consider ill health termination by the employer, this procedure provides a process under which this will be managed.

All HSC Organisations are committed to applying the following set of principles to support the promotion of attendance and management of absence:

- a) Compassionate Support
- b) HSC Values
- c) Collective Leadership
- d) Early Intervention
- e) Equality & Fairness

▪ **What the key constraints (for example financial, legislation or other)?**

Effective implementation will require line managers to regularly apply the procedure and respond to individual need. To support this a toolkit has been developed and training will be provided. The new EQUIP system will help support management of the process in a more streamlined manner. Implementation of the policy is supported by Human Resources and by Occupational Health.

This Policy will be applied in adherence with all relevant Employment & Equality Legislation, with particular consideration given to the responsibilities outlined within the Disability Discrimination Act.

1.3 Main stakeholders affected (internal and external)

For example, staff, actual or potential service users, other public sector organisations, voluntary and community groups, trade unions or professional organisations or private sector organisations or others

- All HSC employees and line managers
- Trade Unions
- Human Resources
- Occupational Health
- Health and Safety
- Department of Health

NB: The above list is not exhaustive

1.4 Other policies or decisions with a bearing on this policy or decision.

- **What are they? / Who owns them?**
 - HSC Health and Wellbeing Framework
 - CCGANI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
 - CCGANI Equality Scheme
 - Disability Equality Policy and Reasonable Adjustment Toolkit
 - HSC Code of Conduct for Staff
 - HSC Terms and Conditions of Employment
 - CCGANI Disciplinary Policy (due to non-compliance)

2. CONSIDERATION OF EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS ISSUES AND EVIDENCE USED

2.1 Data Gathering

What information did you use to inform this equality screening? For example, previous consultations, statistics, research, Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), complaints. Provide details of how you involved stakeholders, views of colleagues, services users, staff side or other stakeholders.

- Census 2021
- Workforce Data December 2025 (HRPTS)

2.2 Quantitative Data

Who is affected by the policy or decision? Please provide a statistical profile. Note if policy affects both staff and service users, please provide profile for both.

Category	What is the makeup of the affected group (%)? Are there any issues or problems? For example, a lower update that needs to be addressed or greater involvement of a particular group?
-----------------	---

Gender	Children’s Court Guardian Agency staff data December 2025:
---------------	--

Male	14.47%
Female	85.53%

Population Profile

The population of Northern Ireland based on NISRA Census Data as at 2021 was 1,903,175

Male 936,131 (49.2%)

Female 967,044 (50.8%)

No questions relating to gender identity were asked in the NI Census.

Age

Children’s Court Guardian Agency staff data December 2025:

16-24	0.00%
25-29	1.32%
30-34	2.63%
35-39	7.89%
40-44	21.05%
45-49	10.53%
50-54	19.74%
55-59	22.37%
60-64	10.53%
>=65	3.95%

Population Profile

The population demographic by age within Northern Ireland (NISRA 2021)

0-4	113,820	6%
5-9	124,475	7%
10-14	136,918	7%
15-19	113,203	5.95%
20-24	111,386	5.85%
25-29	116,409	6.12%
30-34	126,050	6.62%
35-39	127,313	6.69%
40-44	122,163	6.42%
45-49	121,670	6.39%
50-54	130,967	6.88%
55-59	129,276	6.79%
60-64	113,049	5.94%
65-69	93,464	4.91%
70-74	83,467	4.39%
75-79	66,377	3.49%

	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>80-84</td> <td>43,776</td> <td>2.30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>85-89</td> <td>25,879</td> <td>1.36</td> </tr> <tr> <td>90 and over</td> <td>13,512</td> <td>0.71</td> </tr> </table>	80-84	43,776	2.30%	85-89	25,879	1.36	90 and over	13,512	0.71										
80-84	43,776	2.30%																		
85-89	25,879	1.36																		
90 and over	13,512	0.71																		
Religion / Community Background	<p>Children’s Court Guardian Agency staff data December 2025:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Perceived Protestant</td> <td>2.63%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Protestant</td> <td>27.63%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Perceived Roman Catholic</td> <td>2.63%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Roman Catholic</td> <td>39.47%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Neither</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Perceived Neither</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not assigned</td> <td>27.63%</td> </tr> </table> <p>Population Profile from Census 2021:</p> <p>42.31% of population from a Catholic background 37.36% of population from Protestant and other Christian background 20.33% of population from other religions, no religion or religion not stated</p>	Perceived Protestant	2.63%	Protestant	27.63%	Perceived Roman Catholic	2.63%	Roman Catholic	39.47%	Neither	0.00%	Perceived Neither	0.00%	Not assigned	27.63%					
Perceived Protestant	2.63%																			
Protestant	27.63%																			
Perceived Roman Catholic	2.63%																			
Roman Catholic	39.47%																			
Neither	0.00%																			
Perceived Neither	0.00%																			
Not assigned	27.63%																			
Political Opinion	<p>Children’s Court Guardian Agency staff data December 2025:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Broadly Nationalist</td> <td>7.89%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>3.95%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Broadly Unionist</td> <td>6.58%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not assigned</td> <td>67.11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Do not wish to answer</td> <td>14.47%</td> </tr> </table> <p>Population Profile (Census 2021)</p> <p>Total NI Residents: 1,903,178</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>British only</td> <td>606,263</td> <td>31.86%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Irish only</td> <td>554,415</td> <td>29.13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Northern Irish only</td> <td>376,444</td> <td>19.78%</td> </tr> </table>	Broadly Nationalist	7.89%	Other	3.95%	Broadly Unionist	6.58%	Not assigned	67.11%	Do not wish to answer	14.47%	British only	606,263	31.86%	Irish only	554,415	29.13%	Northern Irish only	376,444	19.78%
Broadly Nationalist	7.89%																			
Other	3.95%																			
Broadly Unionist	6.58%																			
Not assigned	67.11%																			
Do not wish to answer	14.47%																			
British only	606,263	31.86%																		
Irish only	554,415	29.13%																		
Northern Irish only	376,444	19.78%																		

	British and Irish only	11,768	0.62%
	British and Northern Irish only	151,327	7.95%
	Irish and Northern Irish only	33,581	1.76%
	British, Irish and Northern Irish only	28,050	1.47%
	Other	141,327	7.43%
Marital Status	Children's Court Guardian Agency staff data December 2025:		
	Divorced	2.63%	
	Married/Civil Partnership	42.11%	
	Other	3.95%	
	Separated	0.00%	
	Single	10.53%	
	Unknown	40.79%	
	Widow/er	0.00%	
	Not Assigned	0.00%	
	Population Profile (Census 2021)		
Total NI Residents (over the age of 16: 1,514,743			
	Single (never married)	576,708	38.07%
	Married	690,509	45.59%
	In a civil partnership	2,472	0.18%
	Separated (bt still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership)	57,272	3.78%
	Divorced or formerly I a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved	91,128	6.02%
	Widowed or surviving partner from a civil partnership	96,384	6.36%

Dependent Status	Children's Court Guardian Agency staff data December 2025:		
	Yes	21.05%	
	Not assigned	67.11%	
	No	11.84%	
	Population Profile (Census 2021)		
	Total Households with dependent children 768,809		
	No children in household	423,956	55.14%
	No dependent children in household/All children in household non-dependent	120,314	15.65%
	One dependent child aged 0-4	27,233	3.54%
	One dependent child aged 5-11	21,123	2.75%
	One dependent child aged 12-18	39,203	5.10%
	Two dependent children, youngest aged 0-4	32,598	4.24%
	Two dependent children, youngest aged 5-11	36,534	4.75%
Two dependent children, youngest aged 12-18	18,532	2.41%	
Three or more dependent children, youngest aged 0-4	24,120	3.14%	
Three or more dependent children, youngest aged 5-11	21,677	3.14	
Three or more dependent children, youngest aged 12-18	3,519	0.46	

Disability	Children's Court Guardian Agency staff data December 2025		
	No	59.21%	
	Not assigned	39.47%	
	Yes	1.32%	
NI Population Profile 2021 Census			
Total NI Household 768,810			
No residents have a limiting long-term health problem or disability		423,945	55.14%
1 resident has a limiting long-term health problem or disability		258,537	33.63%
2 or more residents have a limiting long-term health problem or disability		86,328	11.23%
Ethnicity	Children's Court Guardian Agency staff data December 2025		
	Not assigned	64.47%	
	White	35.53%	
	Other	0.00%	
	Black African	0.00%	
	Indian	0.00%	
	Chinese	0.00%	
	Population Profiles (Census 2021)		
Total NI Residents: 1,903,178			
White	1,837,575	96.55%	
Irish Traveller	2,609	0.14%	
Roma	1,529	0.08%	
Indian	9,881	0.52%	
Chinese	9,495	0.50%	
Filipino	4,451	0.23%	
Pakistani	1,596	0.08%	

	Arab	1,817	0.10%
	Other Asian	5,244	0.28%
	Black African	8,069	0.42%
	Black Other	2,963	0.16%
	Mixed	14,382	0.76%
	Other ethnicities	3,568	0.19%
Sexual Orientation	Children's Court Guardian Agency staff data December 2025:		
	Do not wish to answer	1.32%	
	Not assigned	67.11%	
	Opposite sex	30.26%	
	Both Sexes	0.00%	
	Same sex	1.32%	
	Population Profile (Census 2021):		
	Total NI Residents: 1,514,743		
	Straight or heterosexual	1,363,859	90.04%
	Gay or Lesbian	17,713	1.17%
Bisexual	11,306	0.75%	
Other sexual orientation	2,597	0.17%	
Prefer not to say	69,307	4.58%	
Not stated	49,961	3.30%	

2.3 Qualitative Data

What are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the categories in relation to this policy or decision and what equality issues emerge from this? Note if policy affects both staff and service users, please discuss issues for both.

Category	Needs and Experiences
Gender	<p>HSC has a higher proportion of females employed compared to the general population. This is largely due to the occupational groups i.e. nursing and midwifery is the largest job group with significantly higher level of female participation. Within CCGANI there is a larger number of women than men.</p> <p>This policy supports all staff regardless of gender. Where appropriate, the HSC Health and Wellbeing framework takes into consideration gender specific health issues including for example menopause or men's mental health and resources are invested to support staff.</p> <p>Specific health issues in respect of gender reassignment and transgender people and support for staff who may be transitioning, will be considered by CCGANI under the policy parameters.</p>
Age	<p>45% of the HSC workforce is aged 45 and over and the link between age and health/disability acknowledged. 67% of the CCGANI workforce is aged 40 and over. This policy supports all staff regardless of age and responds to individual need.</p>
Religion / Community Background	<p>There is no data to suggest that there are specific needs or experiences arising within this category.</p>

Category	Needs and Experiences
Political Opinion	There is no data to suggest that there are specific needs or experiences arising within this category.
Marital Status	There is no data to suggest that there are specific needs or experiences arising within this category.
Dependent Status	There is no data to suggest that there are specific needs or experiences arising within this category. However, there is evidence to shows that female employees are more likely to shoulder the burden of caring responsibilities for children and that this may in turn impact upon the absence levels of staff.
Disability	<p>The Northern Ireland population has a high level of disability. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland advice and good practice suggests that disability related sickness absence should be recorded separately from other sickness absence, as disabled people may be required to avail more of sickness absence leave due to their disability, in comparison to non-disabled people.</p> <p>Staff who are disabled, may require advice from Occupational Health and Health & Safety when putting appropriate adjustments in place. A Workplace Adjustment Plan has been developed to support the application of this policy.</p>
Ethnicity	There is no data to suggest that there are specific needs or experiences arising within this category.
Sexual Orientation	There is no data to suggest that there are specific needs or experiences arising within this category.

<p>2.4 Making Changes</p> <p>Based on the equality issues you identified in 2.2 and 2.3, what changes did you make or do you intend to make in relation to policy or decision in order to promote equality of opportunity?</p>	
<p>In developing the policy or decision what did you do or change to address the equality issues you identified?</p>	<p>What do you intend to do in future to address the quality issues you identified?</p>
<p>Gender/Age:</p> <p>Ensure that the specific needs of employees are considered regardless of gender or age.</p> <p>Dependent status:</p> <p>Ensure that the needs of those employees who have dependents are supported through a range of other policies and procedures including Special Leave arrangements such as – Carer’s Leave, Emergency Leave and parental leave as appropriate and through the provision of flexible working arrangements.</p> <p>Disability:</p> <p>Ensure that the needs of those employee’s disabilities are supported through the provision of reasonable adjustments. A Workplace Adjustment plan has been developed to support this.</p>	<p>HSC/CCGANI is committed to providing equality of opportunity, and strives to promote a good and harmonious working environment where every employee is treated with respect and dignity and in which no one is disadvantaged based on their age, disability, marital or civil partnership status, political opinion, race, religious belief, sex (including gender reassignment), sexual orientation, with dependants or without dependants.</p> <p>HSC/CCGANI will consider mitigating circumstances and arrangements will be put into place to assist accommodating an employee with specific needs arising from any of the protected characteristics when managing attendance at work.</p> <p>The Agency will monitor the levels of disability in the workforce. Currently 39.4% of disability monitoring for the CCGANI workforce was ‘Not Assigned’.</p>

2.5 Good Relations

What changes to the policy or decision – if any – or what additional measures would you suggest to ensure that it promotes good relations? (Refer to guidance notes for guidance on impact.)

Group	Impact	Suggestions
Religion	HSC/CCGANI is committed to providing equality of opportunity, and strives to promote a good and harmonious working environment where every employee is treated with respect and dignity and consistent with the HSC Values of Compassion, Openness and Honesty, Excellence and Working Together.	
Political Opinion	As above	
Ethnicity	As above	

3. SHOULD THE POLICY OR DECISION BE SUBJECT TO A FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT?

A full equality impact assessment (EQIA) is usually confined to those policies or decisions considered to have major implications for equality of opportunity.

How would you categorise the impacts of this decision or policy? (Refer to guidance notes for guidance on impact.)

Please tick:

Major impact	
Minor impact	x
No further impact	

Do you consider that this policy or decision needs to be subjected to a full equality impact assessment?

Please tick:

Yes	
No	x

Please give reasons for your decisions:

Any issues highlighted by affected staff will be able to be mitigated by support from management and access to support from employment policies, the application of terms and conditions and advice from human resources and occupational health. Staff are also encouraged to liaise with their Trade Union representatives for advice and support throughout the application of the policy and procedure.

It is not felt that subjecting the policy to a full EQIA will highlight any further equality issues.

4. CONSIDERATION OF DISABILITY DUTIES

4.1 In what ways does the policy or decision encourage disabled people to participate in public life and what else could you do to do so?	
How does the policy or decision currently encourage disabled people to participate in public life?	What else could you do to encourage disabled people to participate in public life?
Supports employees via reasonable adjustments to work to the required level.	Create confidence that all possible adjustments can be made to encourage disabled people to choose HSC as an employer they can trust to accommodate their needs.

4.2 In what ways does the policy or decision promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and what else could you do to do so?	
How does the policy or decision currently promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?	What else could you do to promote attitudes towards disabled people?
Disability is a key when considering the impacts of this policy on staff. Reasonable adjustments will be considered for staff with disability to ensure their needs are met in the outworking's and practical application of the policy.	HSC/CCGANI will continue to ensure that disability considerations and the promotion of positive attitudes are at the forefront of thinking regarding the application of this policy.

5. CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

5.1 Does the policy or decision affect anyone's Human Rights? Complete for each of the articles.	
Article	Yes/No
Article 2: Right to Life	No
Article 3: Right to freedom from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.	No
Article 4: Right to freedom from slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.	No
Article 5: Right to liberty and security of person.	No
Article 6: Right to a fair and public trial within a reasonable time.	No
Article 7: Right to freedom from retrospective criminal law and no punishment without law.	No
Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence.	No
Article 9: Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.	No
Article 10: Right to freedom of expression.	No
Article 11: Right to freedom of assembly and association.	No
Article 12: Right to marry and found a family.	No
Article 14: Prohibition of discrimination in the enjoyment of the convention rights.	No
1 st protocol Article 1: Right to a peaceful enjoyment of possessions and protection of property.	No
1 st protocol Article 2: Right of access to education.	No

If you have answered no to all of the above please move on to Question 6 on Monitoring.

5.2 If you have answered yes to any of the Articles in 5.1, does the policy or decision interfere with any of these rights? If so, what is the interference and who does it impact upon?

List the Article Number	Interfered with? Yes/No	What is the interference and who does it impact upon?	Does this raise legal issues?* Yes/No

*It is important to speak to your line management on this and if necessary seek legal opinion to clarify this.

5.3 Outline any actions which could be taken to promote or raise awareness of human rights or to ensure compliance with the legislation in relation to the policy or decision.

--

6. MONITORING

6.1 What data will you collect in the future in order to monitor the effect of the policy or decision on any of the categories (for equality of opportunity or good relations, disability duties and human rights)?		
Equality & Good Relations	Disability Duties	Human Rights
HSC/CCGANI will continue to collect and collate equality data on all staff		

Approved Lead Officer: Jennifer Ferguson

Position: Head of Corporate Services

Date: 01/04/2026

Policy/Decisions Screened by: Sinéad Casey

Please note that having completed the screening you are required by statute to publish the completed screening template, as per your organisation's equality scheme. If a consultee, including the Equality Commission, raises a concern about a screening decision based on supporting evidence, you will need to review the screening decision.

Any request for this document in another format or language will be considered.