

Northern Ireland

Social

Care

Council

Equality and Human Rights Screening Template

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council 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.

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)

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

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)

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

For advice and support on screening contact:

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SCREENING TEMPLATE

(1) INFORMATION ABOUT THE POLICY OR DECISION

1.1 Title of policy or decision

Northern Ireland Social Care Council - Compensation measure assignment (specialist programmes)

1.2 Description of policy or decision

- **what is it trying to achieve? (aims and objectives)**
- **how will this be achieved? (key elements)**
- **what are the key constraints? (for example financial, legislative or other)**

A Memorandum of Understanding allows holders of degrees awarded from all generic social work programmes to be recognised by all UK regulators. However, there are a number of specialist programmes (Frontline/Step Up/Think Ahead) which may not be deemed as generic depending on the content of the curriculum of the particular programme in the period it was undertaken and the practice learning experience.

The Social Care Council has endorsed a recommendation that applicants can be registered with restrictions on their practice to their initial specialist area of training for a limited period. The need for a compensation measure to mitigate any gaps in the programme will depend on the social work programme completed and the outcome of the assessment.

Previously graduates of specialist programmes who were assessed as requiring a compensation measure were required to complete a module of the Professional in Practice (PiP) Initial Professional Development (IPD) Programme in an area of practice which was deemed to be a gap in the original qualification. This meant undertaking a Level 7 programme despite the gap identified being in a Level 6 qualification. Further to this, the modules identified as being suitable were removed from the programme requiring the development of another form of compensation measure.

Requiring a practice learning placement was deemed to be overly difficult to arrange or manage given full time work and availability of potential placements.

Therefore, the compensation proposed is:

- a 2500-word assignment or 20-minute oral presentation (supported by a 1000 word written submission) which addresses the gaps in academic and/or practice learning which will be:
 - assessed as a Level 6 assignment by 2 sessional Professional Advisers (social workers with experience of Learning and Development)
 - undertaken within a specified time period
 - paid for by the registrant.

The outcome is that the registrant will have engaged in learning and development activities to ensure they have sufficient knowledge to be able to work across any social work settings in Northern Ireland. The relevant legislation is outlined below:

Legislation:

The Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 determines that social workers can be registered under the following circumstances:

- (2) The first condition is that—
 - (a) in the case of an applicant for registration as a social worker—
 - (i) he has successfully completed a course approved by the Council under section 10 for persons wishing to become social workers;
 - (ii) he satisfies the requirements of section 11; or
 - (iii) he satisfies any requirements as to training which the Council may by rules impose in relation to social workers;
 - 10. (5) A course for persons who wish to become social workers shall not be approved under this section unless the Council considers that it is such as to enable persons completing it to attain the required standard of proficiency in relevant social work.
 - 10A. (3) The Council may conduct, or make arrangements for the conduct of assessments in connection with the recognition by the Council of the attainment of any standard of proficiency described in the rules.]

11.—F1(A1)

(1) An applicant for registration [F2 in the principal part of the register] satisfies the requirements of this section if—

- (a) F3
 - (b) he has, elsewhere than in Northern Ireland, undergone training in relevant social work and either—
 - (i) that training is recognised by the Council as being to a standard sufficient for such registration; or

(ii) it is not so recognised, but the applicant has undergone in Northern Ireland or elsewhere such additional training as the Council may require.

Availability of feasible measures:

There are currently no other feasible measures available.

Financial:

Assignments/oral presentation require assessment and it is acknowledged that this will carry a cost for the applicant to the register.

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

- registrants who have completed a UK specialist social work qualifying programme and are subject to the requirement to complete a compensation measure
- social work service users who may be affected if a service is provided by a social worker who has not demonstrated generic knowledge of social work.
- Staff (core or sessional) required to assess the compensation measure
- Employers who have recruited a graduate of a specialist social work programme

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

- **what are they?**
- **who owns them?**
The Northern Ireland Social Care Council
(Registration) Rules 2025

(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, service users, staff side or other stakeholders.

Statistics were sourced from both the Northern Ireland Social Care Council register and from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The views of colleagues have been sought at various points via discussion, and a meeting on 4 August 2025. Previous measures were deemed inappropriate given that they accord with a post qualifying framework rather than qualifying education. In addition, these measures are no longer available to us.

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	<i>What is the makeup of the affected group? (%) Are there any issues or problems? For example, a lower uptake that needs to be addressed or greater involvement of a particular group?</i>
Gender	<p>This proposal applies only to graduates of UK specialist social work programmes.</p> <p>Since 2017, there have been 10 applications to the register from graduates of specialist social work programmes. Of these, 6 have applied since November 2024 and have not yet been allocated a compensation measure. Of the other 4, 3 were required to undertake a compensation measure. Given the low volume of people to whom this applies, it is difficult to provide a reliable equality profile, therefore it is not appropriate to comment further on issues relating to age, disability, marital status, religion, political opinion, dependent status, sexual orientation or ethnicity.</p> <p>Broader social work and social care workforce Social Care Council registration data for the NI in Sept 2025 reports the social work workforce is majority female. The breakdown includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part 1 (qualified social workers) – Female (82%) Male (18%). <p>NI population Most recent estimates for the population of Northern Ireland was 1,903,100. Male = 49.2%; Female = 50.8% (NISRA, 2021), however while</p>

	<p>some of the applicants are returners to Northern Ireland, some are from other parts of the UK.</p> <p>It is however likely that more applicants to the register shall be female and therefore this shall apply to more females. To date, 7 of the 10 applicants to the register have been female.</p>
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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.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Needs and Experiences</i>
Gender	<p>Those with a learning disability or physical disability affecting the ability to produce written records may struggle to complete the compensation measure. However, both software and hardware which enable the writing process will be allowed.</p> <p>Social work is a female dominated profession (85% on 13/8/25), and therefore it is likely that most applicants, and therefore most of those affected, will be female. However, all applicants who graduate from these programmes will be assessed to determine whether a compensation measure is required. While women are more likely to be impacted by the need to complete a compensation measure, this is due to the make-up of the social work workforce.</p> <p>Language barriers may exist for those from different ethnic backgrounds, however English proficiency is, already, a requirement of registration. The time frames shall apply to all regardless of working patterns, and requests for an extension shall be considered in line with the extension policy applied by the Social Care Council elsewhere to ensure equity and consistency.</p>
Age	
Religion	
Political Opinion	
Marital Status	
Dependent Status	
Disability	
Ethnicity	
Sexual Orientation	

2.4 Multiple Identities

Are there any potential impacts of the policy or decision on people with multiple identities? For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people.

Those whose first language is not English and who, also, have a disability which affects their ability to produce written reports may have difficulty meeting the requirements but as noted, English proficiency and the ability to produce written reports are a requirement of social workers. Software and hardware designed to assist with disabilities affecting the ability to produce written reports will be permitted.

2.5 Making Changes

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 the policy or decision in order to promote equality of opportunity?

<i>In developing the policy or decision what did you do or change to address the equality issues you identified?</i>	<i>What do you intend to do in future to address the equality issues you identified?</i>
<p>Requiring a practice learning placement was deemed to be overly difficult to arrange or manage given full or part time working patterns and availability of potential placements. We considered and agreed an alternative to a 2,500 word assignment – an oral presentation. This, however will still require a 1000 word supporting submission which is not unreasonable given the requirements (legal and otherwise) for social workers to be able to produce reports and recordings. The timeframes for submission of an oral or written submission will be six months.</p>	<p>We intend to seek feedback from the any applicants who undertake a compensation measure and consider that feedback in future iterations of the measure.</p>

2.6 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)

<i>Group</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Suggestions</i>
Religion	None identified at this stage	none
Political Opinion	None identified at this stage	none
Ethnicity	None identified at this stage	none

(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)

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

Please tick:

Major impact	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minor impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No further impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Please tick:

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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(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?

<i>How does the policy or decision currently encourage disabled people to participate in public life?</i>	<i>What else could you do to encourage disabled people to participate in public life?</i>
People with disabilities are encouraged to use appropriate software/hardware to enable them to undertake the compensation measure.	

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?

<i>How does the policy or decision currently promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?</i>	<i>What else could you do to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?</i>
People with disabilities are encouraged to use appropriate software/hardware to enable them to undertake the compensation measure.	

(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 & forced or compulsory labour	No
Article 5 – Right to liberty & security of person	No
Article 6 – Right to a fair & public trial within a reasonable time	No
Article 7 – Right to freedom from retrospective criminal law & no punishment without law	No
Article 8 – Right to respect for private & family life, home and correspondence.	No
Article 9 – Right to freedom of thought, conscience & religion	No
Article 10 – Right to freedom of expression	No
Article 11 – Right to freedom of assembly & association	No
Article 12 – Right to marry & 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 & 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 manager 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 and good relations, disability duties and human rights)?

Equality & Good Relations	Disability Duties	Human Rights
<p>Feedback shall be sought from applicants in relation to their experience in the first year of the compensation measure roll out to determine learning across these categories.</p> <p>Should numbers of applications to the register from graduates of specialist social work programmes increase, we shall consider collecting quantitative equality data and qualitative equality data on the experience of the policy and process.</p>		

Approved Lead Officer: Catherine McGuire
Position: Interim Co-Director of Regulation and Standards
Date: 1 May 2026

Policy/Decision Screened by: Tricia Devlin

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.

Please forward completed template to:

Equality.Unit@hscni.net

Any request for the document in another format or language will be considered. Please contact:

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