



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE TERMS OF
SERVICE FOR CHEMISTS AS SET OUT IN
SCHEDULE 2 TO THE PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES
REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 1997: CLINICAL
GOVERNANCE AND VIOLENT PATENTS**

**Equality Screening, Disability Duties and Human
Rights Assessment**

June 2026

Part 1 – Policy Scoping

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Part 1. Policy Scoping

1.1 Information about the policy / decision

1.1.1 What is the name of the policy / decision?

The Pharmaceutical Services (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

1.1.2 Is this an existing, revised or a new policy / decision?

Revised policy.

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

The proposals, if implemented, would amend the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 to enhance existing clinical governance arrangements and enable pharmacy contractors (or their staff) the ability to refuse to provide pharmaceutical services to a person(s) engaged in work-related violence against pharmacy staff, i.e. who is violent, threatens violence, or commits, or threatens to commit a criminal offence, without being in breach of their terms of service.

It is intended that the proposed amendments being put forward in respect of the establishment of a legislative clinical governance framework, would bring community pharmacy in line with the clinical governance arrangements already in place for other healthcare professionals and for community pharmacy contractors in other parts of the UK. Compliance with these proposed changes would further demonstrate and embed quality and accountability in every interaction with patients and members of the public.

In addition, the outline proposals for potential legislative amendments to the terms of service for chemists in respect of being able to refuse to provide pharmaceutical services to a violent or potentially violent patient, would ensure that a community pharmacy contractor would not be in breach of their Terms of Service if they (or their staff) refused to provide pharmaceutical services to a person(s) engaged in work-related violence i.e. who is violent, threatens violence, or commits, or threatens to commit a criminal offence. This is in line with the policy position across the HSC, that assaults on health professionals are not acceptable.

1.1.4 If there are any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy, please explain how.

There are no specific Section 75 categories that might be expected to benefit more from the intended policy over others. These policy proposals would be applicable to all chemists and pharmacy contractors providing HSC pharmaceutical services to patients in NI irrespective of their section 75 categorisation.

1.1.5 Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Department of Health (NI)

1.1.6 Who owns and who implements the policy?

The Department of Health (NI)

1.2 Implementation Factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision? If yes, are they

Financial

Legislative

Other

The regulations will make provision to allow the Department to introduce changes to the Terms of Service for Chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (NI) 1997.

The policy change would be implemented through the introduction of amending subordinate legislation under powers conferred by the HPSS Order 1972. Such amending regulations would be subject to the negative resolution procedure before the NI Assembly.

1.3 Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

Staff

Service users

Other public sector organisations

Voluntary/community/trade unions

Other, please specify

1.4 Other policies with a bearing on this policy / decision. If any:

Policy	Owner(s) of the policy

1.5 Available Evidence

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

According to the [General Pharmaceutical Services for Northern Ireland: Annual Statistics 2024/25 report](#), at UK level, NI has the highest number of pharmacies per 100,000 population for 2023/24 at 26.7 pharmacies per 100, population. In comparison, the UK average is 19.2 pharmacies per 100,000 people. This difference may be explained by the fact that there are fewer dispensing GP practices in NI. The same report also highlights that over 99.4% of the population is living within 5 miles of a pharmacy. However, in many cases, the distance between home and pharmacy was far shorter - 72.5% of all people lived within 1 mile of a pharmacy.

The mid-year NI population estimates produced by the NI Statistics and Research Agency for 2024 indicate a 1.92 million¹ NI population. Each of the Section 75 categories is considered below however, the Department is of the view that the implementation of amendments to the terms of service of chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 aimed at enhancing existing clinical governance arrangements and enabling pharmacy contractors (or their staff) the ability to refuse to provide pharmaceutical services, would not have the potential to impact on a particular Section 75 category of the total NI population if implemented.

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information
Religious belief	<p>There is no qualitative or quantitative evidence available in relation to the religious beliefs of those chemists who are providing HSC pharmaceutical services.</p> <p>The policy proposal to amend the terms of service of chemists would affect all chemists and pharmacy businesses providing HSC Pharmaceutical Services in NI irrespective of their religious beliefs.</p>

¹[Mid-Year Population Estimates | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)

<p>Political opinion</p>	<p>There is no qualitative or quantitative evidence available in relation to the political opinion of those chemists who are providing HSC pharmaceutical services.</p> <p>The policy proposal to amend the terms of service of chemists would affect all chemists and pharmacy businesses providing HSC Pharmaceutical Services in NI irrespective of their political opinion.</p>
<p>Racial group</p>	<p>There is no qualitative or quantitative evidence available in relation to the racial group of those chemists who are providing HSC pharmaceutical services.</p> <p>The policy proposal to amend the terms of service of chemists would affect all chemists and pharmacy businesses providing HSC Pharmaceutical Services in NI irrespective of their racial group.</p>
<p>Age</p>	<p>There is no qualitative or quantitative evidence available in relation to the age of those chemists who are providing HSC pharmaceutical services.</p> <p>The policy proposal to amend the terms of service of chemists would affect all chemists and pharmacy businesses providing HSC Pharmaceutical Services in NI irrespective of their age.</p>
<p>Marital status</p>	<p>There is no qualitative or quantitative evidence available in relation to the marital status of those chemists who are providing HSC pharmaceutical services.</p> <p>The policy proposal to amend the terms of service of chemists would affect all chemists and pharmacy businesses providing HSC Pharmaceutical Services in NI irrespective of their marital status.</p>
<p>Sexual orientation</p>	<p>There is no qualitative or quantitative evidence available in relation to the sexual orientation of those chemists who are providing HSC pharmaceutical services.</p> <p>The policy proposal to amend the terms of service of chemists would affect all chemists and pharmacy businesses providing HSC Pharmaceutical Services in NI irrespective of their sexual orientation.</p>
<p>Gender (Men and women generally)</p>	<p>There is no qualitative or quantitative evidence available in relation to the gender of those chemists who are providing HSC pharmaceutical services.</p> <p>The policy proposal to amend the terms of service of chemists would affect all chemists and pharmacy businesses providing HSC Pharmaceutical Services in NI irrespective of their gender.</p>

Disability (with or without)	<p>There is no qualitative or quantitative evidence available in relation to the disability status of those chemists who are providing HSC pharmaceutical services.</p> <p>The policy proposal to amend the terms of service of chemists would affect all chemists and pharmacy businesses providing HSC Pharmaceutical Services in NI irrespective of whether they are with or without disability.</p>
Dependants (with or without)	<p>There is no qualitative or quantitative evidence available in relation to the dependant status of those chemists who are providing HSC pharmaceutical services.</p> <p>The policy proposal to amend the terms of service of chemists would affect all chemists and pharmacy businesses providing HSC Pharmaceutical Services in NI irrespective of whether they are with or without dependants.</p>

1.6 Needs, Experiences and Priorities

[Taking into account the information recorded in 1.1 to 1.5, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories](#)

Any specific needs, experiences and priorities for individual policies, projects or service developments undertaken to meet the outcomes in the delivery plan will be dealt with, as appropriate, at the individual policy, project or service development level.

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious belief	<p>There is no evidence to suggest individuals that different religions will have any different needs, experiences or priorities in relation to any potential amendments that might be made to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997.</p>
Political opinion	<p>There is no evidence to suggest individuals with different political opinions will have any different needs, experiences or priorities in relation to any potential amendments that might be made to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997.</p>

Racial group	There is no evidence to suggest individuals from different racial groups will have any different needs, experiences or priorities in in relation to any potential amendments that might be made to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997.
Age	There is no evidence to suggest individuals of different ages will have any different needs, experiences or priorities in in relation to any potential amendments that might be made to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997.
Marital status	There is no evidence to suggest individuals with different marital status will have any different needs, experiences or priorities in in relation to any potential amendments that might be made to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997.
Sexual orientation	There is no evidence to suggest individuals with different sexual orientation will have any different needs, experiences or priorities in relation to any potential amendments that might be made to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997.
Gender (Men and women generally)	There is no evidence to suggest individuals from different genders will have any different needs, experiences or priorities in relation to any potential amendments that might be made to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997.
Disability (with or without)	There is no evidence to suggest individuals with or without a disability will have any different needs, experiences or priorities in relation to any potential amendments that might be made to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997.
Dependants (with or without)	There is no evidence to suggest that individuals with or without dependants will have any different needs, experiences or priorities in relation to any potential amendments that might be made to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997

Part 2. Screening Questions

2.1 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)		
Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Religious belief	No impact on equality of opportunity has been identified for those affected by the policy proposals.	None
Political opinion	No impact on equality of opportunity has been identified for those affected by the policy proposals.	None
Racial group	No impact on equality of opportunity has been identified for those affected by the policy proposals.	None
Age	No impact on equality of opportunity has been identified for those affected by the policy proposals.	None
Marital status	No impact on equality of opportunity has been identified for those affected by the policy proposals.	None
Sexual orientation	No impact on equality of opportunity has been identified for those affected by the policy proposals.	None
Gender (Men and women generally)	No impact on equality of opportunity has been identified for those affected by the policy proposals.	None
Disability (with or without)	No impact on equality of opportunity has been identified for those affected by the policy proposals.	None
Dependants (with or without)	No impact on equality of opportunity has been identified for those affected by the policy proposals.	None

2.2 Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?		
Section 75 category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
Religious belief		No. These are potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 and will have no impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity for people with different religious beliefs.
Political opinion		No. These are potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 and will have no impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity for people with different political opinions.
Racial group		No. These are potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 and will have no impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity for people with different racial groupings.
Age		No. These are potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 and will have no impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity for people of different ages.

Marital status		No. These are potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 and will have no impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity for people with different marital status.
Sexual orientation		No. These are potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 and will have no impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity for people with different sexual orientation.
Gender (Men and women generally)		No. These are potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 and will have no impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity for people of different gender.
Disability (with or without)		No. These are potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 and will have no impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity for people with or without disability.
Dependants (with or without)		No. These are potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 and will have no impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity for people with or without dependants.

2.3 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
Religious belief	No expected impact on good relations	None
Political opinion	No expected impact on good relations	None
Racial group	No expected impact on good relations	None

2.4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?		
Good relations category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief		No. These are potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 that will have no impact on the promotion of good relations between people of different religious beliefs.

Political opinion		No. These are potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 that will have no impact on the promotion of good relations between people of different political opinions.
Racial group		No. These are potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 that will have no impact on the promotion of good relations between people of different racial groupings.

2.5 Additional considerations

Multiple identity

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities (e.g. minority ethnic people with a disability, women with a disability, young protestant men, young lesbian, gay or bisexual persons). Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

There is no specific data available to suggest that these potentially enabling amendments to the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 will have any potential impacts on people with multiple identities.

2.6 Was the original policy / decision changed in any way to address any adverse impacts identified either through the screening process or from consultation feedback. If so please provide details.

No adverse impacts have been identified in relation to the proposals at this stage. Following the completion of a consultation on the proposals and in light of any feedback received on the screening and on impacts on section 75 groups, the Department will consider any impacts identified and will take forward any appropriate actions as necessary to mitigate such impacts.

Part 3. Screening Decision

3.1 How would you summarise the impact of the policy / decision?

No impact

Minor impact

Major impact

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Consider mitigation (3.4 – 3.5)

3.2 Do you consider that this policy / decision needs to be subjected to a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)?

Yes – screened in

No – screened out

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

3.3 Please explain your reason for making your decision at 3.2.

The intention of the consultation is to explore proposals to amend the terms of service for chemists as set out in Schedule 2 to the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 to enhance existing clinical governance arrangements and enable pharmacy contractors (or their staff) the ability to refuse to provide pharmaceutical services to a person(s) engaged in work-related violence i.e. who is violent, threatens violence, or commits, or threatens to commit a criminal offence, without breaching their terms of service.

The establishment of a clinical governance framework in legislation will ensure chemists providing HSC pharmaceutical services are accountable for continually improving the quality of their services and safeguarding high standards of care, whilst giving a chemist the ability to refuse to provide HSC pharmaceutical services to an individual displaying violent or threatening behaviour, without being in breach of their terms of service, will ensure the safety and protection of those involved in providing HSC pharmaceutical services to patients. It is therefore expected that this will have only positive benefits for all section 75 groups, especially those who might provide and access HSC pharmaceutical services.

Mitigation

If you have concluded at 3.1 and 3.2 that the likely impact is '**minor**' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, you must consider mitigation (or scope for further mitigation if some is already included as per 2.6) to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

3.4 Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

Yes

No

If you responded "**Yes**", please give the **reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

The impact is expected to be minor positive.

3.5 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.

Not applicable - Policy has not been screened in for Equality Impact Assessment.

Part 4. Monitoring

Monitoring is an important part of policy development and implementation. Through monitoring it is possible to assess the impacts of the policy / decision both beneficial and adverse.

4.1 Please detail how you will monitor the effect of the policy / decision?

The feedback from the consultation will be considered and any policy or regulatory impacts arising or identified from the consultation will be taken forward by the Department in conjunction with the Assembly and details of monitoring will be included as part of those changes.

4.2 What data will you collect in the future in order to monitor the effect of the policy/decision?

Any additional information gathered during the consultation will be used to further assess any negative impacts that implementation of proposals may have.

In addition, if the consultation was to lead to legislative changes being introduced, the Departments Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) would be required to monitor the possible negative impact of the proposals on the provision and delivery of HSC pharmaceutical services.

Part 5. Disability Duties

5.1 Does the policy/decision in any way promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and/or encourage their participation in public life?

No – these proposals do not promote positive attitudes towards any specific groups in society nor do they encourage participation in public life.

5.2 Is there an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people or encourage their participation in public life by making changes to the policy/decision or introducing additional measures?

Not applicable.

Part 6. Human Rights

6.1 Does the policy / decision affect anyone's Human Rights?

The impact screening exercise did not identify any major positive or negative human rights impacts in the proposed consultation.

ARTICLE	POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT	NEUTRAL IMPACT
Article 2 – Right to life			✓
Article 3 – Right to freedom from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment			✓
Article 4 – Right to freedom from slavery, servitude & forced or compulsory labour			✓
Article 5 – Right to liberty & security of person			✓
Article 6 – Right to a fair & public trial within a reasonable time			✓
Article 7 – Right to freedom from retrospective criminal law & no punishment without law.			✓
Article 8 – Right to respect for private & family life, home and correspondence.			✓
Article 9 – Right to freedom of thought, conscience & religion			✓
Article 10 – Right to freedom of expression			✓
Article 11 – Right to freedom of assembly & association			✓
Article 12 – Right to marry & found a family			✓
Article 14 – Prohibition of discrimination in the enjoyment of the convention rights			✓
1 st protocol Article 1 – Right to a peaceful enjoyment of possessions & protection of property			✓
1 st protocol Article 2 – Right of access to education			✓

6.2 If you have identified a likely negative impact who is affected and how?

Not applicable.

6.3 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/decision.

Not applicable.

Part 7 – Approval and Authorisation

	Name	Grade	Date
Screened completed by:	Eddie Murphy	Acting Grade 7	25 June 2026
Approved by ¹	Chris Garland	Grade 6	25 June 2026
Forwarded to E&HR Unit ²			

Notes:

¹ The Screening Template should be approved by a senior manager responsible for the policy this would normally be at least Grade 7.

² When the Equality and Human Rights Unit receive a copy of the final screening it will be placed on the Department’s website and will be accessible to the public from that point on. In addition, consultees who elect to receive it, will be issued with a quarterly listing all screenings completed during each three-month period.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO INFORM THE ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT TO THE EQUALITY COMMISSION

(PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT PART OF THE SCREENING TEMPLATE BUT MUST BE COMPLETED AND RETURNED WITH THE SCREENING)

1. Please provide details of any measures taken **to enhance the level of engagement with individuals and representative groups**. Please include any use of the Equality Commissions guidance on consulting with and involving children and young people.

The Department has included a question in the consultation on the equality and rural screening required in NI. In addition to the consultation being made available on the Departments website the consultation will also be sent to a targeted list of stakeholders including all chemists and pharmacy contractors as well as any organisations in NI that are directly involved or that will have an interest in the provision and/or delivery of HSC Pharmaceutical Services in NI.

2. In developing this policy / decision, were any changes made as a result of equality issues raised during:
 - (a) pre-consultation / engagement;
 - (b) formal consultation;
 - (c) the screening process; and/or
 - (d) monitoring / research findings.If so, please provide a brief summary including how the issue was identified, what changes were made, and what will be the expected outcomes / impacts for those affected.

This screening has been taken forward in conjunction with the undertaking of a consultation on these proposals. Specific feedback has been sought through the consultation on the potential impacts that the policy proposals might have on section 75 groups in NI.

3. Does this policy / decision include any measure(s) to **improve access to services** including the provision of information in accessible formats? If so, please provide a short summary.

These policy proposals do not directly include measures to improve access to services, although the establishment of a clinical governance framework in legislation will ensure chemists providing HSC pharmaceutical services are accountable for continually improving the quality of their services and safeguarding high standards of care, whilst giving a chemist the ability to refuse to provide HSC pharmaceutical services without breach of their terms of service will ensure the safety and protection of those involved in providing HSC pharmaceutical services to patients. The Department will provide accessible formats of the consultation on request.

Thank you for your co-operation.
Equality and Human Rights Unit.