



Equality Screening, Disability Duties and Human Rights Assessment Template

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Guidance notes are available to assist with completing this template. For further help please contact the Equality and Human Rights Unit ext 20539.

Part 1. Policy scoping

1.1 Information about the policy / decision

1.1.1 What is the name of the policy / decision?

The New Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025

NI Firefighters' Pension Scheme – NFPS - Retained Firefighters (Modified Scheme) – 2nd Options Exercise – additional remedy and flexibility

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

This is a revised policy.

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

The proposals seek to amend the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme (NFPS) in order to implement policy proposals in respect of the Matthews remedy second options exercise for retained firefighters. They focus on the government's commitment to provide additional remedy and flexibility to those members who were employed as retained firefighters between 7 April 2000 and 5 April 2006 inclusive by providing access to the modified provisions of the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme (NFPS), referred to as 'the modified scheme'

A number of areas that were not covered in the 2015 and 2023 legislation have been identified. Amendments are now necessary to make additional provisions to the modified section of the NFPS to fully implement the Matthews' remedy and provide an extension to the deadline.

The policy proposals address issues which have arisen during the implementation of the second options exercise and propose to allow:

- the payment of a missed pension lump sum/survivor's missed pension payment in respect of a deceased individual who would have been entitled to a pension (or a higher pension) under the Matthews remedy;
- the extension of the eligibility criteria for an 'additional death grant' payment, so that it is also payable in respect of those individuals who did

not join (or did not get an opportunity to join) the modified scheme during the 2014 Options exercise;

- individuals who joined the modified scheme as special deferred members the option to convert relevant standard service in the NFPS to special service in the modified scheme;
- for a minor clarification to be made to an existing reference to 'additional death grant';
- eligible individuals with periods of 'opted out' service in the standard NFPS to count this towards their special service;
- flexibility to apply new provisions beyond 30 April 2026;
- the closure deadline of the 2023 Options exercise to be extended;
- members who join the modified scheme as special pensioner members, and who are in receipt of a 'member initiated early payment of pension', the ability to convert their standard service to special service.

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

No

1.1.5 Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The policy was developed by the Department of Health.

1.1.6 Who owns and who implements the policy?

The Department of Health has responsibility for the policy and its introduction. The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) is responsible for implementing provisions resulting from this policy revision.

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 ☐

No

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

Retained Firefighters within the Northern Ireland Firefighters' Pension Schemes

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) who administer the scheme

Firefighter Trade Unions

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

Policy	Owner(s) of the policy
None	

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.

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information
Religious belief	Religion will have no bearing on uptake of the legislation
Political opinion	Political opinion will have no bearing on uptake of the legislation
Racial group	Ethnicity will have no bearing on uptake of the legislation
Age	There is no evidence to support any age group taking up the legislation differently.
Marital status	Marital status will have no bearing on uptake of the legislation
Sexual orientation	Sexual orientation will have no bearing on uptake of the legislation
Gender (Men and women generally)	The legislation will apply equally to people of either gender although due to the makeup of NIFRS firefighters, more males than females will be affected.
Disability (with or without)	The legislation will apply equally to people with a disability
Dependants (with or without)	Dependent status will have no bearing on uptake of the legislation

* **Qualitative data** – refers to the experiences of individuals related in their own terms, and based on their own experiences and attitudes. Qualitative data is often used to complement quantitative data to determine why policies are successful or unsuccessful and the reasons for this.

Quantitative data - refers to numbers (that is, quantities), typically derived from either a population in general or samples of that population. This information is often analysed either using descriptive statistics (which summarise patterns), or inferential statistics (which are used to infer from a sample about the wider population).

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

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious belief	There is no evidence that religious belief will have any different needs, experiences, priorities or issues in relation to the proposals.
Political opinion	There is no evidence that political opinion will have any different needs, experiences, priorities or issues in relation to the proposals.
Racial group	There is no evidence that different racial groups will have any different needs, experiences, priorities or issues in relation to the proposals.
Age	There is no evidence that different age groups will have any different needs, experiences, priorities or issues in relation to the proposals.
Marital status	There is no evidence that marital status will have any different needs, experiences, priorities or issues in relation to the proposals.
Sexual orientation	There is no evidence that sexual orientation will have any different needs, experiences, priorities or issues in relation to the proposals.
Gender (Men and women generally)	There is no evidence that gender will have any different needs, experiences, priorities or issues in relation to the proposals.
Disability (with or without)	There is no evidence that people with disabilities will have any different needs, experiences, priorities or issues in relation to the proposals.
Dependants (with or without)	There is no evidence that those of different dependant status will have any different needs, experiences, priorities or issues in relation to the proposals.

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.	None
Political opinion	No impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Racial group	No impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Age	No impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Marital status	No impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Sexual orientation	No impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Gender (Men and women generally)	No impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Disability (with or without)	No impact on equality of opportunity.	None
Dependants (with or without)	No impact on equality of opportunity.	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
All Groups	-	There is no realistic scope for the policy itself to be used to promote equality of opportunity for persons within any Section 75 groups.

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	The policy will not impact on good relations.	None
Political opinion	The policy will not impact on good relations.	None
Racial group	The policy will not 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	-	There is no realistic scope for the policy itself to be used to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
Political opinion	-	There is no realistic scope for the policy itself to be used to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
Racial group	-	There is no realistic scope for the policy itself to be used to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

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 are no potential impacts of the policy for persons within any Section 75 groups including 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. This screening will be reviewed based on consultation responses received.

Part 3. Screening decision

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

No impact
Minor impact
Major impact

✓

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

✓

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

The proposed changes to the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme will not create any significant adverse impact on any of the Section 75 groups.

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

✓

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

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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?

There are no specific outcomes from this policy/decision that require monitoring. Information gathered from this consultation and similar consultations being carried out for the other Firefighters Pension Schemes in GB will be used to monitor any potential impact.

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

The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service is required to review the rate of opt outs from the firefighter pension schemes and this will be used to monitor the effect of the scheme.

Please note: - For the purposes of the annual progress report to the Equality Commission you may later be asked about the monitoring you have done in relation to this policy and whether that has identified any Equality issues.

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?

The legislation will not discourage people with a disability from participating in public life nor will it fail to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.

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?

There is no opportunity to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people or encourage their participation in public life by changing or introducing additional measures to the legislation.

Part 6. Human Rights

6.1 Please complete the table below to indicate whether the policy / decision affects anyone's Human Rights?

ARTICLE	POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT = human right interfered with or restricted	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?

No negative impacts were identified within the legislation

At this stage we would recommend that you consult with your line manager to determine whether to seek legal advice and to refer to Human Rights Guidance to consider:

- *whether there is a law which allows you to interfere with or restrict rights*
- *whether this interference or restriction is necessary and proportionate*
- *what action would be required to reduce the level of interference or restriction in order to comply with the Human Rights Act (1998).*

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.

No actions can be taken to promote or raise awareness of human rights or ensure compliance with the legislation in relation to the policy.

Part 7 - Approval and authorisation

	Name	Grade	Date
Screened completed by	Claire McComb	SO	21/1/25
Approved by ¹	Siobhan McKelvey	G7	21/1/25
Forwarded to E&HR Unit ²			1/7/26

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.