

<b>Title:</b> Legislation to apply an inflationary increase to dog licence fees.	<b>Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)</b>	
	<b>Date:</b> March 2026	
	<b>Type of measure:</b> Secondary Legislation	
<b>Lead department or agency:</b> Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (the Department)	<b>Stage:</b> Initial	
	<b>Source of intervention:</b> Domestic NI	
<b>Other departments or agencies:</b> N/A	<b>Contact details:</b> Animal Welfare and Dog Control Policy Branch	
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## Summary Intervention and Options

### What is the problem under consideration? Why is government intervention necessary? (7 lines maximum)

Under the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983, dog owners are required to hold a valid licence. The current standard licence fee has remained unchanged since 2011, despite rising costs associated with enforcement, additional challenges in relation to public safety and dangerous dogs, kennelling and administrative costs borne by local councils. The Department has been made aware that the cost to councils exceeds the income generated from dog licence fees. The Department is therefore considering an increase in the dog licence fee to ensure the scheme remains financially viable, promotes responsible ownership, and supports wider dog welfare and public safety objectives.

### What are the policy objectives and the intended effects? (7 lines maximum)

The policy aims to ensure that the dog licensing system in Northern Ireland remains sustainable and capable of meeting statutory enforcement duties. The licence fee has remained unchanged since 2011, however costs to councils have increased and inflation has risen significantly during that period. It seeks to provide councils with additional resources to manage stray dogs, conduct investigations, and enforce dog control legislation. Increasing the fee will support wider public safety, reduce environmental nuisance, and improve dog welfare outcomes.

### What policy options have been considered, including any alternatives to regulation? Please justify preferred option (further details in Evidence Base) (10 lines maximum)

**Option 1:** Do nothing – the licence fee would remain as it is, the resource implications for councils would continue to widen.

**Option 2:** (*the preferred option*) – The Department introduces new legislation to increase the licence fees in line with inflation. This option would provide councils with a more applicable level of resource to carry out their statutory dog control enforcement role.

**Option 3:** The Department introduces new legislation to increase the licence fees at full cost recovery to the councils.

**Option 2** is the preferred option as it will increase income generated from licence fees to the councils by approximately 49% but allow licence fee to remain reasonable and proportionate.

**Will the policy be reviewed?** It will be reviewed

**If applicable, set review date:** 2036

### Cost of Preferred (or more likely) Option

Total outlay cost for business £m	Total net cost to business per year £m	Annual cost for implementation by Regulator £m
0	0	0

<b>Does Implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?</b>		<b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Is this measure likely to impact on trade and investment?</b>		<b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are any of these organisations in scope?	<b>Micro</b>	<b>Small</b>	<b>Medium</b>
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Large</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

**The final RIA supporting legislation must be attached to the Explanatory Memorandum and published with it.**

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Summary: Analysis and Evidence

# Policy Option 2

Description: Increase in Dog Licence Fees in line with inflation

## ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT (Option 2)

Costs (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy) (constant price) Years	Average Annual (recurring) (excl. transitional) (constant price)	Total Cost (Present Value)
Low	0Optional	0	0Optional
High	0Optional	0	0Optional
<b>Best Estimate</b>		<b>£396K</b>	<b>£3.96M</b>

**Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups'** Maximum 5 lines  
 The primary monetised cost falls on individual dog owners, who will pay an increase in the annual dog licence fee (e.g., an increase of £6.00 from £12.50 to £18.50). Councils may incur small one-off communication and administrative update costs associated with publicising the new fee. Organisations operating boarding kennels or holding block licences will face minor increases. Overall, monetised costs are low and proportionate relative to the benefits of improved enforcement funding. There will be some resource implications for the Department to introduce new legislation.

**Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups'** Maximum 5 lines  
 The Department does not hold information on costs to councils for the administrative costs of updating systems, forms etc to reflect updated licence fees; however, these will not be recurring costs as the fee will not be updated annually and councils will also benefit financially from the licence fee increase.

Benefits (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy) (constant price) Years	Average Annual (recurring) (excl. transitional) (constant price)	Total Benefit (Present Value)
Low	Optional	Optional	Optional
High	Optional	Optional	Optional
<b>Best Estimate</b>			

**Description and scale of key monetised benefits by 'main affected groups'** Maximum 5 lines  
 Additional financial resource will support the delivery of the dog warden service by enabling councils to recover a larger portion of their costs. The service provided by dog wardens is not only provided for the benefit of dog owners, but to all citizens.

**Other key non-monetised benefits by 'main affected groups'** Maximum 5 lines  
 The policy will support improved dog control by providing more resource to council's dog warden service.

**Key Assumptions, Sensitivities, Risks** Maximum 5 lines  
 Key assumptions include stable licence uptake, steady dog population levels, and councils' capacity to implement the fee change without significant system alteration. Risks include a short-term decrease in compliance or public criticism, mitigated through communication and engagement. There is also a risk that enforcement costs continue to rise faster than revenue, but increasing the fee now helps address the current gap.

## BUSINESS ASSESSMENT (Option 2)

Direct Impact on business (Equivalent Annual) £m		
Costs:0	Benefits:0	Net:0

## Cross Border Issues (Option 2)

**How does this option compare to other UK regions and to other EU Member States (particularly Republic of Ireland)** Maximum 3 lines  
 The other devolved administrations of the United Kingdom (England, Scotland and Wales) do not require owners to licence their dog. Dog owners in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) required to licence their dog; licences in ROI cost €20 for a yearly licence or €120 for a lifetime licence. This is equivalent to approximately £17.29 and £103.71 respectively.

## **Evidence Base**

### **Problem under consideration**

The current dog licence fee in Northern Ireland has remained unchanged since 2011 despite rising costs associated with enforcement, kennelling and administration. Councils report insufficient income to deliver dog warden services required by dog control legislation. Without intervention, enforcement capacity may decline, resulting in higher stray dog numbers and increased risks to public safety and animal welfare.

### **Rationale for intervention**

Government intervention is required because dog licensing is a statutory regime under the Dogs (NI) Order 1983 and the licence fee is set in legislation. Fee levels cannot be adjusted without regulatory change. The market alone cannot deliver the public safety and welfare outcomes associated with dog control, as these rely on statutory enforcement and coordinated activity across councils. Updating the fee ensures the licensing regime can remain functional.

### **Policy objective**

The policy aims to improve cost recovery for councils to maintain a dog licensing system and better resourced dog warden service.

### **Options**

#### **Option 1: Do nothing**

The licence fees would remain at their current level. This would not address the concerns raised by councils around the costs of service delivery; the resource gap would continue to widen; and it would risk reduced enforcement activity. This option is not recommended.

#### **Option 2: The Department increases the licence fees in line with inflation**

This option increases the standard, concessionary and block dog licence fees to align with inflation rates. It reflects an increase of 48%, compared to the 150% increase in 2011. Therefore, it would meaningfully contribute to cost recovery while remaining affordable for the majority of dog owners. Additionally, it is administratively simple and aligns with existing systems.

This is the preferred option.

#### **Option 3: The Department increases the licence fees at full cost recovery to councils**

This option reflects the standard approach of achieving full cost recovery for fees according to Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI) guidance. This would allow income raised through licence fees to cover all costs incurred in carrying out the regulatory functions, including the receipt and processing of applications, compliance monitoring, review and variation of licence conditions, and the issue of warning letters and notices.

Under MPMNI, the council's statutory responsibilities under the Dogs Order serves all members of the public, not just those who pay for dog licences. For instance, stray dogs are collected and impounded as a measure to safeguard the community from incidents such as attacks or sheep worrying. The service provided by dog wardens is not only provided for the benefit of dog owners, but to all citizens. As it is not only dog owners who benefit from the impounding of strays, but the public at large a mixture of user charging and ratepayer funding is deemed appropriate.

Councils have provided the Department information on the cost of enforcement and administration of the dog licence regime and have advised the total overall expenditure across the 11 council areas is approximately £5,457,004. To achieve full cost recovery, based on the 2024/2025 council statistics, the licence fee would need to increase to approximately £50; this is an average fee and does not take into account a concessionary fee or block licence fee.

This option was ruled out as it is a significant increase for dog owners and could impede the policy aims by discouraging owners from licensing animals, leading to increased non-compliance and thereby reducing the income to councils from the service. A licence fee set to achieve full cost recovery could meet intense political and stakeholder resistance on the basis it would penalise dog ownership, encourage licence evasion and the abandonment of dogs.

This option is not recommended.

## Monetised Costs

### Costs to Dog Owners

The Department is proposing an amendment to increase dog licence fees for single licences, block licences, and concessionary licences. The revised fee amounts will be established in legislation and adjusted according to the rate of inflation. To determine the updated rates, the Bank of England inflation calculator was used to convert the 2011 licence fees to projected costs effective September 2025.

According to the Bank of England inflation calculator, the adjusted figures are £18.59 for single licences, £47.59 for block licences, and £7.44 for concessionary licences.<sup>1</sup>

The Department proposes amending the Dogs Order to set the annual dog licence fees at £18.50 for single licences, £47.50 for block licences, and £7.50 for concessionary licences. The table below outlines both current licence fees and the proposed new rates.

Licence Type	Current licence fee	New proposed licence fee
Single	£12.50	£18.50
Block	£32.00	£47.50
Concessionary	£5.00	£7.50

Statistics collated from all eleven councils from April 2024 to March 2025 show income generated from licence fees was £806,950. Based on the number of licences issued between April 2024 to March 2025 it is estimated the income from new licence fees would be £1,203,042, generating an additional income of £396,092 per annum. The estimated additional income of £396k per annum amounts to £3.96 million across the ten-year period of this assessment.

The Department recognises that increasing dog licence fees will impose a modest additional cost on dog owners; however, the increase has been set at a level that is proportionate and not punitive. It is not expected to deter responsible ownership, encourage licence evasion, or contribute to the abandonment of dogs.

## Council Costs

Statistics collated from all eleven councils from April 2024 to March 2025<sup>2</sup> show 133,251 licences were issued for 138,083 dogs in Northern Ireland. Concessionary licence fees make up a majority

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<sup>1</sup> [Inflation calculator | Bank of England](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Council Dog Summary Statistics 2024/25 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

of this income (71%) with only 28% of dog owners in Northern Ireland paying the full licence cost of £12.50. Block licences are a small portion of this income (less than 1%).

The additional costs for an individual owner would be approximately £6.00 for a single licence, £15.50 for a block licence and £2.50 for the concessionary fee. The average lifespan of a dog is 10 to 13 years<sup>3</sup>, therefore it is estimated the maximum additional cost to an individual owner is £78 for a single licence, £201.50 for a block licence and £32.50 for a concessionary licence over 13 years. Statistics collated from councils show that most dog licences issued in Northern Ireland are on a concessionary basis so the majority of dog owners will have an annual increase in their dog licence of £2.50.

Licence Type	Current cost to dog owner for average lifespan of a dog	New cost to dog owner for average lifespan of a dog
Single	£125 - £162.50	£185 - £240.50
Block	£320 - £416	£475 - £617.50
Concessionary	£50 - £65	£75 - £97.50

The Department does not hold information on costs to councils for the administrative costs of updating systems, and forms to reflect updated licence fees; however, these are expected to be minimal and will not be recurring costs. The fee increase will lead to minor administrative adjustments for councils and a short-term risk of reduced licence compliance as the new fee beds in.

## Department Costs

The Department will incur minimal costs associated with the development and implementation of the policy. These include staff time to prepare the legislative amendment, carry out public consultation, analyse responses, and develop supporting guidance for councils. Additional costs may arise from communications activity to inform the public of the updated fee, although these are expected to be very small and absorbed within existing Departmental resources. No ongoing or significant operational costs are anticipated, as enforcement responsibilities remain with local councils under current arrangements.

## Benefits

The new legislation will provide councils with additional financial resources to support delivery of dog warden services, helping to address rising costs since the fee was last updated in 2011. Increased revenue will ease funding pressures associated with administration, kennelling, and investigation of offences under the Dogs Order.

Therefore, the delivery of the dog licensing regime will be better supported by enabling more effective dog control through a better-resourced enforcement service. The increased fee represents a reasonable contribution from dog owners towards public dog control measures that benefit the wider community.

## Overall Impact Benefits > Costs

Current dog licence fees are nominal in relation to the overall cost of owning and caring for a dog, and they do not reflect the full costs incurred by councils in administering licences and delivering dog control services. Increasing the fee will help councils recover a greater share of these expenses and promote responsible dog ownership.

<sup>3</sup> [How Long Do Dogs Live? | PetMD](#)

The additional revenue is expected to support delivery of dog warden services, enabling improved dog control, more effective enforcement, and enhanced public safety. These benefits are anticipated to outweigh any potential short-term reduction in licence compliance as the new fee is introduced.

The Department recognises the challenging financial climate and the pressures faced by households. While the proposal introduces a small increase in annual costs for dog owners, the resulting improvements to enforcement capacity and community safety will provide wider benefits to the public.

## Appendix I - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template

### SECTION 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

#### 1A. Name of Public Authority.

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

#### 1B. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

Regulation made under the Dogs Order (Northern Ireland) 1983, to increase dog licence fees in Northern Ireland.

#### 1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.

Developing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Adopting a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Revising a	Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Designing a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Delivering a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		

#### 1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

Proposal to increase dog licence fees in Northern Ireland in line with inflation.

#### 1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

The aim of this policy is to increase the dog licence fees to help councils to cover more of the cost of dog control services in their council area and promote responsible dog ownership. Dog licence fees were introduced in Northern Ireland in 1983 at an annual rate of £5. This rate remained unchanged until 2011, when it was increased to £12.50.

**1F. What definition of 'rural' is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?**

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition).

Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

*Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.*

N/A

*Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.*

N/A

*Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.*

N/A

## SECTION 2 - Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

**2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?**

Yes  No  If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **2E**.

**2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.**

The aim of this policy is to increase the dog licence fees to help councils to cover more of the cost of dog control services in their council area and promote responsible dog ownership. Dog licence fees were introduced in Northern Ireland in 1983 at an annual rate of £5. This rate remained unchanged until 2011, when it was increased to £12.50.

The Department has been made aware the cost of various activities related to licensing and dog control such as administering licences and delivering dog control services via dog wardens exceeds the income generated from dog licence fees.

This policy will impact dog owners in both urban and rural settings equally.

The Department has carried out a Regulatory Impact Assessment which provides details on the costs/benefits analysis.

**2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.**

This policy will apply equally across all dog owners and locations in Northern Ireland, regardless of whether they are based in rural areas or towns/ cities. People from rural areas would not be impacted differently to those who are based in urban areas.

**2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.**

Rural Businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education or Training in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poverty in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deprivation in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Crime or Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agri-Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state)	<input type="text"/>

**If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A.**

**2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.**

N/A

### SECTION 3 - Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

**3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?**

Yes  No  If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **3E**.

**3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.**

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			<input type="checkbox"/>

**3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.**

N/A

**3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?**

N/A

**If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A.**

**3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?**

The social and economic needs of people in rural areas in relation to this policy, involving increasing dog licence fees, do not differ from the social and economic needs of the people from urban areas on this occasion.

## **SECTION 4 - Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas**

### **4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.**

The social and economic needs of people in rural areas in relation to this policy, involving increasing dog licence fees, do not differ from the social and economic needs of people from urban areas in this occasion, so no consideration was given to social or economic needs as they are same across all areas.

## SECTION 5 - Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

**5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?**

Yes  No  If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **5C**.

**5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified.**

N/A

If the response to Section **5A** was **YES** GO TO Section **6A**.

**5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.**

There have been no specific rural needs identified. The needs of all members of public and stakeholders have been considered, regardless of the location of dog owners and they are considered to be equal across rural and urban areas.

## SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording

**6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.**

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information compiled.



<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:</b>	Michelle Matthews
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Deputy Principal
<b>Division/Branch</b>	Animal Health and Welfare Policy Division
<b>Signature:</b>	<i>M. Matthews</i>
<b>Date:</b>	23 March 2026
<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:</b>	Christopher Andrews
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	G6
<b>Division/Branch:</b>	Animal Health and Welfare Policy Division
<b>Signature:</b>	C. Andrews
<b>Date:</b>	08 April 2026

# Equality & Disability Duties Screening Template

December 2023 version



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**  
[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

An Roinn  
**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department o'  
**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**

**Screening flowchart and template (taken from Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 - A Guide for public authorities April 2010 (Appendix 1)).**

### Introduction

**Part 1. Policy scoping** – asks public authorities to provide details about the policy, procedure, practice and/or decision being screened and what available evidence you have gathered to help make an assessment of the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

**Part 2. Screening questions** – asks about the extent of the likely impact of the policy on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories. Details of the groups consulted and the level of assessment of the likely impact. This includes consideration of multiple identity and good relations issues. This section also includes two questions related to the Disability Duties.

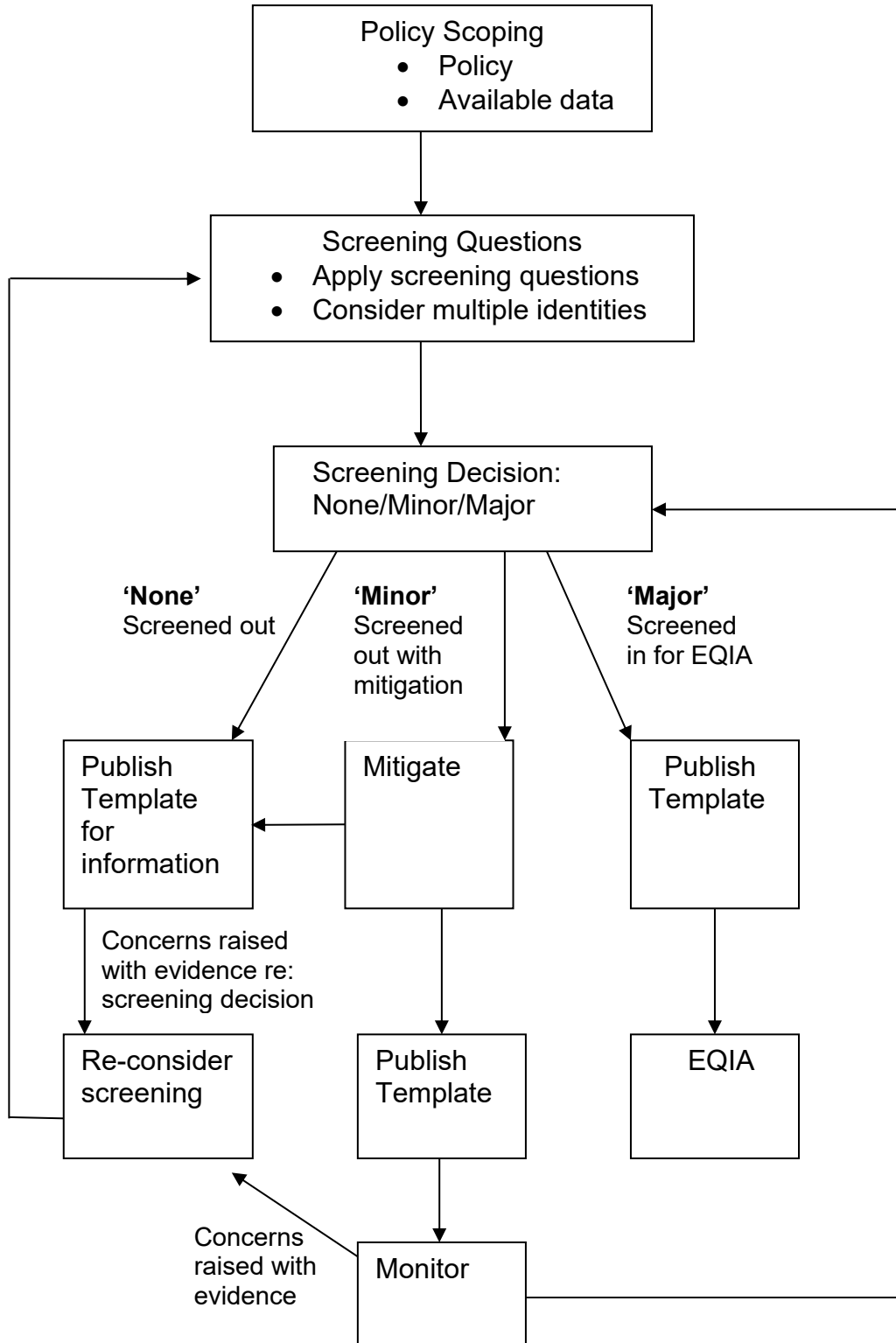
**Part 3. Screening decision** – guides the public authority to reach a screening decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA), or to introduce measures to mitigate the likely impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

**Part 4. Monitoring** – provides guidance to public authorities on monitoring for adverse impact and broader monitoring.

**Part 5. Consideration of Human Rights** – please note this is not a Human Rights Screening form but rather a prompt that impacts on Human Rights should be considered.

**Part 6. Approval and authorisation** – verifies the public authority’s approval of a screening decision by a senior manager responsible for the policy.

A screening flowchart is provided below.



### Part 1. Policy scoping

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context and set out the aims and objectives for the policy, being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

Public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

### Information about the policy

#### Name of the policy

Inflationary increase to dog licensing fees in Northern Ireland.

#### Is this an existing, revised or new policy?

Revised policy. Dog licence fees were originally set in 1983 by the Dogs Order (Northern Ireland) 1983. Dog licence fees were amended in 2011 by the Dogs Amendment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

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

The policy would increase the dog licence fees for single licences, block licences and concessionary dog licences in Northern Ireland. The dog licence fee amounts would be specified in legislation and in line with the rate of inflation.

A block licence applies to a licence for three or more dogs kept by the dog owner at the same premises. A concessionary dog licence applies to dog owners on income related benefits or dog owners who have their dog neutered.

The policy aims to ensure that the dog licensing system in Northern Ireland remains sustainable and capable of meeting statutory enforcement duties. It seeks to provide councils with additional resources to manage stray dogs, conduct investigations, and enforce dog control legislation. Increasing the fee will support wider public safety, reduce environmental nuisance, and improve dog welfare outcomes.

**Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?**     Yes     No (select as appropriate)

**If so, explain how.**

No. Increasing dog licence fees would affect all dog owners in NI and there is no evidence to suggest that it would impact on any particular section 75 group within the community.

There will, however, be positive impacts to S75 groupings overall by enhancing public safety by implementing better controls over dog ownership and it may also help promote responsible dog ownership as more careful consideration may be given before purchasing a dog.

**Who initiated or wrote the policy?**

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)

**Who owns and who implements the policy?**

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is responsible for dog control policy and legislation.

## Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?  Yes  No (select as appropriate)

If yes, are they (please select as appropriate)

Financial

Legislative

other, please specify:

## Main stakeholders affected

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

Staff

Service users

Other public sector organisations

Voluntary/community/trade unions

Other, please specify

**District Councils** - will be the main organisations affected by the policy, as they are responsible for enforcing the legislation, but they will also benefit from this policy as increasing the dog licence fees will help councils to cover the cost of dog control services in their council area.

## Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they?

The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983

The Dogs (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

The Dogs (Licensing and Identification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

### Who owns them?

DAERA

### Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data. The Commission has produced this guide to [signpost to S75 data](#).

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories. *Please ensure all data used is the most current and up to date available. You should verify this by contacting the Departmental Statisticians.*

### Religious belief evidence/information:

The proposed policy would affect all dog owners in Northern Ireland required to obtain a licence. Officials have researched this policy and considered how it could have an impact on different groups in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence available to suggest that increasing dog licensing fees will impact on stakeholders as the result of their religious beliefs.

Data from the 2021 Census indicates that the main current religions in Northern Ireland were: 42.3% Catholic, 16.6% Presbyterian, 11.6% Church of Ireland, 2.4% Methodist, 6.9% Other Christian denominations and 1.3% 'Other' religions. In addition, 17.4% of the population had 'no religion'<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> [census-2021-ms-b19.xlsx](#)

Statistics provided by the UK Pet Food Association in 2024<sup>2</sup> indicates that there are 13.5 million dogs in the United Kingdom and that 36% of UK households own dogs. In addition, in 2024 it was estimated that 60% of households in the UK had a pet.

A survey from the Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PFMA) from 2022<sup>3</sup> indicated that in Northern Ireland had a higher percentage of homes with pet dogs (44%). Data from Pet Business World indicates that 55% of pet owners live in the city and about one-third are under the age of 40.

There is no evidence to suggest that pet ownership differs by religious belief or that religious belief will be impacted by this legislation.

### **Political Opinion evidence/information:**

The proposed policy would affect all dog owners in Northern Ireland required to obtain a licence. Officials have researched this policy and considered how it could have an impact on different groups in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence available to suggest that increasing dog licensing fees will impact on stakeholders as the result of their political opinion.

However, results from the Northern Ireland Life and Times 2022<sup>4</sup> survey showed the following political opinions of those interviewed:

- Unionist – 31%
- Nationalist – 26%
- Neither – 38%
- Other – 1%
- Don't know – 4%

<sup>2</sup> [UK Pet Food 2024 | Annual Report](#)

<sup>3</sup> [PFMA 2022 Annual Report | Pet Food Manufacturers Association](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2022: Online Questionnaire](#)

There is no evidence to suggest that pet ownership figures stated above differ by political opinion, nor will political opinion be impacted as a result of the introduction of this legislation.

### **Racial Group evidence/information:**

The proposed policy would affect all dog owners in Northern Ireland required to obtain a licence. Officials have researched this policy and considered how it could have an impact on different groups in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence available to suggest that increasing dog licensing fees will impact on stakeholders as the result of their racial background.

A paper on [socio-demographics of pet ownership among adolescents in Great Britain](#), found ethnicity to be the single most important predictor of pet ownership, with white adolescents being more likely to own any type of pets than non-white adolescents.

Census 2021 figures show 96.6% of the NI population identify as White<sup>5</sup>. The new policy will impact all dog owners, and the general public, irrespective of racial group.

### **Age evidence/information:**

The proposed policy would affect all dog owners in Northern Ireland required to obtain a licence. Officials have researched this policy and considered how it could have an impact on different groups in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence available to suggest that increasing dog licensing fees will impact on stakeholders disproportionately as the result of their age.

<sup>5</sup> [census-2021-ms-b01.xlsx](#)

Census 2021 figures show the following age breakdown for the NI population<sup>6</sup>:

- 0-14 – 19.2%
- 15-39 – 31.2%
- 40-64 – 32.4%
- 65 and over – 17.2%

A BMC veterinary Research paper on sociodemographic factors associated with pet ownership noted that pet ownership increased during childhood (up to age 10 years) and was expected to continue on this trajectory. However, it was found to peak, at age 11 for all pet types, then slightly decreased afterwards for all pet types except cats and dogs, which slightly increased.

A PDSA animal wellbeing report in 2022<sup>7</sup> indicated that dog owners are less likely to be in the age range 25-34 (14%) or 35-44 (14%) compared to cat (16% and 17% respectively), but more likely to be 55+ years (36%).

### **Marital Status evidence/information:**

The proposed policy would affect all dog owners in Northern Ireland required to obtain a licence. Officials have researched this policy and considered how it could have an impact on different groups in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence available to suggest that increasing dog licensing fees will impact on stakeholders as the result of their marital status.

Data from the 2021 census showed that 45.6% of the population in NI<sup>8</sup> are married, 38.1% single, 6.0% divorced, 6.4% widowed and 3.8% separated. The policy will affect all dog owners equally, irrespective of marital status.

<sup>6</sup> [census-2021-ms-a02.xlsx](#)

<sup>7</sup> [pdsa-paw-report-2022.pdf](#)

<sup>8</sup> [census-2021-ms-a30.xlsx](#)

A [PDSA animal wellbeing report in 2022](#)<sup>9</sup> showed that dog owners are less likely to live in household of 1 person (12%) or 2 people (40%) but are more likely to be in 3-4 person households (38%) or 5+ people (8%).

Nevertheless, there is no evidence to suggest that marital status as a factor might be impacted by this legislation.

### **Sexual Orientation evidence/information:**

The proposed policy would affect all dog owners in Northern Ireland required to obtain a licence. Officials have researched this policy and considered how it could have an impact on different groups in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence available to suggest that increasing dog licensing fees will impact on stakeholders as the result of their sexual orientation.

Data from the 2021 census showed that approximately 90% of the population are heterosexual, 2.1% gay, lesbian, bisexual or other sexual orientation, and 7.9% did not wish to state or left the question unanswered<sup>10</sup>. However, this policy will affect all dog owners in NI, irrespective of sexual orientation.

There is no evidence to suggest that pet ownership figures stated above differ by sexual orientation or that sexual orientation as a factor will be impacted by the introduction of this legislation.

### **Men & Women generally evidence/information:**

The proposed policy would affect all dog owners in Northern Ireland required to obtain a licence. Officials have researched this policy and considered how it could have an impact on different groups in Northern Ireland. There is no

<sup>9</sup> [pdsa-paw-report-2022.pdf](#)

<sup>10</sup> [census-2021-ms-c04.xlsx](#)

evidence available to suggest that increasing dog licensing fees will impact on stakeholders disproportionately as a result of their gender.

Data from the 2021 census showed that 51% of the population are female and 49% male<sup>11</sup>. Data from a Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PFMA) survey from 2022<sup>12</sup> indicates that households who have a dog are 37% male and 32% female in the UK.

This policy will affect all dog owners in NI, irrespective of sex.

There is no evidence to suggest that gender as a factor will be impacted by the introduction of this legislation.

### **Disability evidence/information:**

The proposed policy would affect all dog owners in Northern Ireland required to obtain a licence. Those who have a dog wholly or mainly for the purpose of assisting that person to carry out normal day-to-day activities relevant to their disability are not required to obtain a licence for that dog. Officials have researched this policy and considered how it could have an impact on different groups in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence available to suggest that increasing dog licensing fees will impact on stakeholders with disabilities, who are required to obtain a licence, disproportionately. Local councils collect data to dog licences in their area and the application form for a dog licence does not request details about disabilities.

Data from the 2021 census shows that 44.9% of the NI population are living with long term health problems or disabilities which impact their day-to-day activities a lot<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> [census-2021-ms-a07.xlsx](#)

<sup>12</sup> [PFMA 2022 Annual Report | Pet Food Manufacturers Association](#)

<sup>13</sup> [census-2021-ms-d03.xlsx](#)

### Dependants evidence/information:

The proposed policy would affect all dog owners in Northern Ireland. Officials have researched this policy and considered how it could have an impact on different groups in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence available to suggest that increasing dog licensing fees will impact on stakeholders disproportionately due to having dependants. Local councils collect the data in relation to dog licences in their area and the application form does not request details about dependents.

Data from the 2021 census shows that 30.7% of households have one or more dependent child under the age of 18<sup>14</sup>.

Data from a Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PFMA) survey from 2022<sup>15</sup> indicates 46% of households who have children also have a dog in the UK.

### Needs, experiences and priorities

**Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision?**

**Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below:**

#### Religious belief

The legislation will increase dog licence fees for single, block and concessionary licences in Northern Ireland. This policy will be applied to all dog owners required to obtain a licence in Northern Ireland. People in this

<sup>14</sup> [census-2021-ms-a24.xlsx](#)

<sup>15</sup> [PFMA 2022 Annual Report | Pet Food Manufacturers Association](#)

equality category are not identified as having distinct needs, experiences or priorities.

### **Political Opinion**

The legislation will increase dog licence fees for single, block and concessionary licences in Northern Ireland. This policy will be applied to all dog owners required to obtain a licence in Northern Ireland. People in this equality category are not identified as having distinct needs, experiences or priorities.

### **Racial Group**

The legislation will increase dog licence fees for single, block and concessionary licences in Northern Ireland. This policy will be applied to all dog owners required to obtain a licence in Northern Ireland. People in this equality category are not identified as having distinct needs, experiences or priorities.

### **Age**

The legislation will increase dog licence fees for single, block and concessionary licences in Northern Ireland. This policy will be applied to all dog owners required to obtain a licence in Northern Ireland. People in this equality category are not identified as having distinct needs, experiences or priorities.

### **Marital status**

The legislation will increase dog licence fees for single, block and concessionary licences in Northern Ireland. This policy will be applied to all dog owners required to obtain a licence in Northern Ireland. People in this

equality category are not identified as having distinct needs, experiences or priorities.

### **Sexual orientation**

The legislation will increase dog licence fees for single, block and concessionary licences in Northern Ireland. This policy will be applied to all dog owners required to obtain a licence in Northern Ireland. People in this equality category are not identified as having distinct needs, experiences or priorities.

### **Men and Women Generally**

The legislation will increase dog licence fees for single, block and concessionary licences in Northern Ireland. This policy will be applied to all dog owners required to obtain a licence in Northern Ireland. People in this equality category are not identified as having distinct needs, experiences or priorities.

### **Disability**

The legislation will increase dog licence fees for single, block and concessionary licences in Northern Ireland. This policy will be applied to all dog owners required to obtain a licence in Northern Ireland. It is understood that people who have a disability may require assistance dogs to aid them in carrying out day to day activities and so they are not required to obtain a dog licence in those circumstances. People in this equality category required to obtain a licence are not identified as having distinct needs, experiences or priorities.

### Dependants

The legislation will increase dog licence fees for single, block and concessionary licences in Northern Ireland. This policy will be applied to all dog owners required to obtain a licence in Northern Ireland. People in this equality category are not identified as having distinct needs, experiences or priorities.

### Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the questions 1-4.

If the public authority's conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the public authority may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, a public authority should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the public authority's conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the public authority's conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or

- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

### **In favour of a ‘major’ impact**

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

### **In favour of ‘minor’ impact**

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;

- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

### In favour of none

- 1) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- 2) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

### Screening questions

- 1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?** Please provide details of the likely policy impacts and determine the level of impact for each S75 categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

#### **Details of the likely policy impacts on *Religious belief*:**

Based on the available evidence cited above, there is nothing to indicate that pet ownership varies by religious belief or that this legislation would
--

have any impact on individuals due to their religious belief. It is therefore the opinion of DAERA that the proposed increase in fees will have no adverse effect on equality of opportunity for this group as it applies equally to all dog owners regardless of Section 75 category.

**What is the level of impact?** Minor  Major  None

(select as appropriate)

**Details of the likely policy impacts on *Political Opinion*:**

Based on the available evidence cited above, there is no evidence to suggest that political opinion has an impact on pet ownership, nor will political opinion be impacted as a result of the introduction of this legislation. It is therefore the opinion of DAERA that the proposed increase in fees will have no adverse effect on equality of opportunity for this group as it applies equally to all dog owners regardless of Section 75 category.

**What is the level of impact?** Minor  Major  None

(select as appropriate)

**Details of the likely policy impacts on *Racial Group*:**

Based on the available evidence cited above, there is no evidence to suggest that racial group has an impact on pet ownership, nor will racial groups be impacted as a result of the introduction of this legislation. It is therefore the opinion of DAERA that the proposed increase in fees will have no adverse effect on equality of opportunity for this group as it applies equally to all dog owners regardless of Section 75 category.

What is the level of impact? Minor  Major  None

(select as appropriate)

**Details of the likely policy impacts on Age:**

Based on the available evidence cited above, there is no evidence to suggest that age has an impact on pet ownership, nor will age be impacted as a result of the introduction of this legislation. It is therefore the opinion of DAERA that the proposed increase in fees will have no adverse effect on equality of opportunity for this group as it applies equally to all dog owners regardless of Section 75 category.

What is the level of impact? Minor  Major  None

(select as appropriate)

**Details of the likely policy impacts on *Marital Status*:**

Based on the available evidence cited above, there is no evidence to suggest that marital status has an impact on pet ownership, nor will marital status be impacted as a result of the introduction of this legislation. It is therefore the opinion of DAERA that the proposed increase in fees will have no adverse effect on equality of opportunity for this group as it applies equally to all dog owners regardless of Section 75 category.

What is the level of impact? Minor  Major  None

(select as appropriate)

**Details of the likely policy impacts on *Sexual Orientation*:**

Based on the available evidence cited above, there is no evidence to suggest that sexual orientation has an impact on pet ownership, nor will sexual orientation be impacted as a result of the introduction of this legislation. It is therefore the opinion of DAERA that the proposed increase in fees will have no adverse effect on equality of opportunity for this group as it applies equally to all dog owners regardless of Section 75 category.

**What is the level of impact** Minor  Major  None

(select as appropriate)

**Details of the likely policy impacts on *Men and Women*:**

Based on the available evidence cited above, there is no evidence to suggest that gender has an impact on pet ownership, nor will gender be impacted as a result of the introduction of this legislation. It is therefore the opinion of DAERA that the proposed increase in fees will have no adverse effect on equality of opportunity for this group as it applies equally to all dog owners regardless of Section 75 category.

**What is the level of impact?** Minor  Major  None

(select as appropriate)

**Details of the likely policy impacts on *Disability*:**

Based on the available evidence cited above, there is no evidence to suggest that disability has an impact on pet ownership, nor will disability be impacted as a result of the introduction of this legislation. It is

therefore the opinion of DAERA that the proposed increase in fees will have no adverse effect on equality of opportunity for this group as it applies equally to all dog owners regardless of Section 75 category.

**What is the level of impact?** Minor  Major  None

(select as appropriate)

**Details of the likely policy impacts on *Dependants*:**

Based on the available evidence cited above, there is no evidence to suggest that dependents have an impact on pet ownership, nor will dependents be impacted as a result of the introduction of this legislation. It is therefore the opinion of DAERA that the proposed increase in fees will have no adverse effect on equality of opportunity for this group as it applies equally to all dog owners regardless of Section 75 category.

**What is the level of impact?**  Major  None

(select as appropriate)

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

Yes  No (select as appropriate)

Detail opportunities of how this policy could promote equality of opportunity for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

**Religious Belief - If Yes, provide details:**

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

There is no impact envisaged on, or opportunity to promote equality of opportunity for people within this category. However, the proposed reforms will be subject to a public consultation, and the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

**Political Opinion - If Yes, provide details:**

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

There is no impact envisaged on, or opportunity to promote equality of opportunity for people within this category. However, the proposed reforms will be subject to a public consultation, and the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

**Racial Group - If Yes, provide details:**

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

There is no impact envisaged on, or opportunity to promote equality of opportunity for people within this category. However, the proposed reforms will be subject to a public consultation, and the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

**Age - If Yes, provide details:**

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

There is no impact envisaged on, or opportunity to promote equality of opportunity for people within this category. However, the proposed reforms will be subject to a public consultation, and the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

**Marital Status - If Yes, provide details:**

N/A

**If No, provide reasons**

There is no impact envisaged on, or opportunity to promote equality of opportunity for people within this category. However, the proposed reforms will be subject to a public consultation, and the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

**Sexual Orientation - If Yes, provide details:**

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

There is no impact envisaged on, or opportunity to promote equality of opportunity for people within this category. However, the proposed reforms will be subject to a public consultation, and the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

**Men and Women generally - If Yes, provide details:**

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

There is no impact envisaged on, or opportunity to promote equality of opportunity for people within this category. However, the proposed reforms will be subject to a public consultation, and the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

**Disability - If Yes, provide details:**

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

There is no impact envisaged on, or opportunity to promote equality of opportunity for people within this category. However, the proposed reforms will be subject to a public consultation, and the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

**Dependants - If Yes, provide details:**

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

There is no impact envisaged on, or opportunity to promote equality of opportunity for people within this category. However, the proposed reforms will be subject to a public consultation, and the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

**3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

Please provide details of the likely policy impact and determine the level of impact for each of the categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

**Details of the likely policy impacts on *Religious belief*:**

This policy is not expected to impact on good relations between people of different religious beliefs because it applies to all dog owners regardless of religious beliefs.

**What is the level of impact?** Minor  Major  None

(select as appropriate)

**Details of the likely policy impacts on *Political Opinion*:**

This policy is not expected to impact on good relations between people of different political opinions because it applies to all dog owners regardless of political opinion.

**What is the level of impact?** Minor  Major  None

(select as appropriate)

**Details of the likely policy impacts on *Racial Group*:**

This policy is not expected to impact on good relations between people of different racial groups because it applies to all dog owners regardless of racial group.

**What is the level of impact?** Minor  Major  None

(select as appropriate)

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

Detail opportunities of how this policy could better promote good relations for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

***Religious Belief* - If Yes, provide details:**

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

No, the policy will apply equally to all stakeholders regardless of religious belief.

***Political Opinion* - If Yes, provide details:**

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

No, the policy will apply equally to all stakeholders regardless of political opinion.

***Racial Group* - If Yes, provide details:**

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

No, the policy will apply equally to all stakeholders regardless of racial group.

## Additional considerations

### Multiple identity

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities? If so, please detail below. *(For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).*

**Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.**

The policy will apply equally to all dog owners who require a licence so people with multiple identities will not be adversely affected.

DAERA also has legislative obligations to meet under the **Disability Discrimination Order**. Questions 5 - 6 relate to these.

## Consideration of Disability Duties

- 5. Does this proposed policy or decision provide an opportunity for DAERA to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?**

The proposed policy would apply equally to all stakeholders. It is not anticipated that it will provide an opportunity to promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability. However, the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

**6. Does this proposed policy or decision provide an opportunity to actively increase the participation by disabled people in public life?**

It does not provide an obvious opportunity to increase the participation by disabled people in public life. This policy is in relation to increasing dog licence fees in Northern Ireland and will apply equally to all stakeholders. However, the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

**Part 3. Screening decision (Please delete as appropriate)**

“Screened out” without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

**If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.**

The policy proposes to increase the dog licence fees for single, block and concessionary dog licences in Northern Ireland to help cover the cost of dog control services, enhance public safety through improved dog control and promote responsible dog ownership.

This Equality and Human Rights Screening Exercise which assessed evidence relating to S75 considerations, including equality of opportunity and good relations, Disability Duties and Human Rights has concluded that the policy would apply equally to all dog owners and no group will be disproportionately impacted.

A public consultation will however invite comments on the proposals, and on this Equality and Human Rights Screening Exercise, and responses will be monitored to further inform the position.

**If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced - please provide details.**

N/A. No mitigations or alternatives are needed. The policy will apply to dog owners equally. A public consultation will however invite comments on the proposals, and on this Equality and Human Rights Screening Exercise, and responses will be monitored to further inform the position.

**If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.**

N/A

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: [A Practical Guide to Equality Impact Assessment](#)

## Mitigation

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

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 (select as appropriate)

If so, ***give the reasons*** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

N/A

### 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.

**On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.**

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	N/A
Social need	N/A
Effect on people’s daily lives	N/A
Relevance to a public authority’s functions	N/A

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Total score	N/A

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority’s Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

**Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?**  Yes  No (select as appropriate)

**If yes, please provide details.**

N/A
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## Part 4. Monitoring

**Section 75 places a requirement on DAERA to have equality monitoring arrangements in place in order to assess the impact of policies and services etc; and to help identify barriers to fair participation and to better promote equality of opportunity. Please note the following excerpt from The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in relation to monitoring:**

*A system must be established to monitor the impact of the policy in order to find out its effect on relevant groups. The results of ongoing monitoring must be reviewed on an annual basis. The public authority is required to publish the results of this monitoring. And they must be included in the public authorities’ annual review on progress to the Equality Commission. The Equality Scheme*

*must specify how and where such monitoring information will be published. It is therefore essential that monitoring is carried out in a systematic manner and that the results are widely and openly published.*

*If the monitoring and analysis of results over a two year period show that the policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the public authority must ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.*

**Further advice on monitoring can be found at: [ECNI Monitoring Guidance for Public Authorities](#)**

**Outline what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the impact of this policy or decision on equality, good relations and disability duties.**

**Equality:**

DAERA will consider all comments generated from the relevant public consultation. Should there be a reduction in the number of dogs being licensed following an increase in fees over a certain period may indicate an adverse impact which would be investigated further.

**Good Relations:**

DAERA will consider all comments generated from the relevant public consultation. Should there be a reduction in the number of dogs being licensed following an increase in fees over a certain period may indicate an adverse impact which would be investigated further.

**Disability Duties:**

DAERA will consider all comments generated from the relevant public consultation. Should there be a reduction in the number of dogs being licensed following an increase in fees over a certain period may indicate an adverse impact which would be investigated further.

**Part 5. Consideration of Human Rights**

**7. The Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998 brings the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law and it applies in N Ireland. Indicate below by deleting Yes/No as appropriate, any potential adverse impacts that the policy or decision may have in relation to human rights issues.**

See Annex A for brief synopsis on each of the Human Rights Articles & Protocols.

Right to Life	<b>Article 2</b>	No
Prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment	<b>Article 3</b>	No
Prohibition of slavery and forced labour	<b>Article 4</b>	No
Right to liberty and security	<b>Article 5</b>	No
Right to a fair and public trial	<b>Article 6</b>	No
Right to no punishment without law	<b>Article 7</b>	No
Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence	<b>Article 8</b>	No

## Equality & Disability Duties – Screening Template

Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion	<b>Article 9</b>	No
Right to freedom of expression	<b>Article 10</b>	No
Right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association	<b>Article 11</b>	No
Right to marry and to found a family	<b>Article 12</b>	No
The prohibition of discrimination	<b>Article 14</b>	No
Protection of property and enjoyment of possessions	<b>Protocol 1 Article 1</b>	No
Right to education	<b>Protocol 1 Article 2</b>	No
Right to free and secret elections	<b>Protocol 1 Article 3</b>	No

**8. Please explain any adverse impacts on human rights that you have identified.**

No adverse impact on human rights have been identified.

**9. Please indicate any ways which you consider the policy positively promotes human rights.**

No ways to positively promote human rights have been identified.

## Part 6 - Approval and authorisation

Before signing off this screening template please confirm that you have completed all the actions listed below.

I can confirm that all the actions listed below have been completed -

- I have explained any technical issues in plain English (easily understood by a 12 year old)
- I have used the most relevant, current & up to date data available
- I have added evidence and explained my assessments in full
- I have provided a brief note to justify my decision to 'Screen In' or 'Screen Out'
- A copy of this screening template and the final decision has been sent to the Equality Unit for their consideration before it has been forwarded for sign-off


**Screening assessment completed by (Staff Officer level or above) -**

**Name:** Michelle Matthews

**Grade:** Deputy Principal

**Branch:** Animal Welfare & Dog Control Policy Branch **Date:** 24/03/2026

**Signature: please insert a scanned image of your signature.**

A rectangular box containing a scanned image of a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Matthews".

**Screening decision approved by (must be Grade 3/Deputy Secretary or above) -**


**Name:** Brian Dooher

**Grade:** 3

**Branch:** VSAHG

**Date:** 16/4/26

**Signature: please insert a scanned image of your signature.**

A rectangular box containing a scanned image of a handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "B. Dooher".

Note: A copy of the Screening Template, for each policy screened should be ‘signed off’ and approved by a senior manager responsible for the policy, made easily accessible on the public authority’s website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.

Please save the final signed version of the completed screening form in the CM container (AE2-19-11940) below as soon as possible after completion and forward the CM link to Equality Branch at [equality@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:equality@daera-ni.gov.uk). The screening form will be placed on the DAERA website and a link provided to the Department’s Section 75 consultees.

For more information about equality screening, contact:

DAERA Equality Unit

Capacity, Capability, Equality & Diversity Branch

Jubilee House

111 Ballykelly Road

LIMAVADY

BT49 9HP

Email: [equality@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:equality@daera-ni.gov.uk)

Tel: 028 7744 2027



## Annex A

### Synopsis of Human Rights Act Articles & Protocols

#### **ARTICLE 2**

##### ***Right to life***

1. Everyone's right to life shall be protected by law. No one shall be deprived of his life intentionally save in the execution of a sentence of a court following his conviction of a crime for which this penalty is provided by law.
2. Deprivation of life shall not be regarded as inflicted in contravention of this Article when it results from the use of force which is no more than absolutely necessary:
  - a. In defense of any person from unlawful violence;
  - b. In order to effect a lawful arrest or to prevent the escape of a person lawfully detained;
  - c. In action lawfully taken for the purpose of quelling a riot or insurrection.

#### **ARTICLE 3**

##### ***Prohibition of torture***

No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

## **ARTICLE 4**

### ***Prohibition of slavery and forced labour***

1. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude.
2. No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.
3. For the purpose of this Article the term “forced or compulsory labour” shall not include:
  - a. Any work required to be done in the ordinary course of detention imposed according to the provisions of Article 5 of this Convention or during conditional release from such detention;
  - b. Any service of a military character or, in case of conscientious objectors in countries where they are recognised, service exacted instead of compulsory military service;
  - c. Any service exacted in case of an emergency or calamity threatening the life or well-being of the community;
  - d. Any work or service which forms part of normal civic obligations.

## **ARTICLE 5**

### ***Right to liberty and security***

1. Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be deprived of his liberty save in the following cases and in accordance with a procedure prescribed by law:
  - a. The lawful detention of a person after conviction by a competent court;
  - b. The lawful arrest or detention of a person for non-compliance with the lawful order of a court or in order to secure the fulfilment of any obligation prescribed by law;
  - c. the lawful arrest or detention of a person effected for the purpose of bringing him before the competent legal authority on reasonable

- suspicion of having committed an offence or when it is reasonably considered necessary to prevent his committing an offence or fleeing after having done so;
- d. the detention of a minor by lawful order for the purpose of educational supervision or his lawful detention for the purpose of bringing him before the competent legal authority;
  - e. The lawful detention of persons for the prevention of the spreading of infectious diseases, of persons of unsound mind, alcoholics or drug addicts or vagrants;
  - f. The lawful arrest or detention of a person to prevent his effecting an unauthorised entry into the country or of a person against whom action is being taken with a view to deportation or extradition.
2. Everyone who is arrested shall be informed promptly, in a language which he understands, of the reasons for his arrest and of any charge against him.
  3. Everyone arrested or detained in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1(c) of this Article shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorised by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release pending trial. Release may be conditioned by guarantees to appear for trial.
  4. Everyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings by which the lawfulness of his detention shall be decided speedily by a court and his release ordered if the detention is not lawful.
  5. Everyone who has been the victim of arrest or detention in contravention of the provisions of this Article shall have an enforceable right to compensation.

## **ARTICLE 6**

### ***Right to a fair trial***

1. In the determination of his civil rights and obligations or of any criminal charge against him, everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal established by law. Judgment shall be pronounced publicly but the press and public may be excluded from all or part of the trial in the interest of morals, public order or national security in a democratic society, where the interests of juveniles or the protection of the private life of the parties so require, or to the extent strictly necessary in the opinion of the court in special circumstances where publicity would prejudice the interests of justice.
2. Everyone charged with a criminal offence shall be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law.
3. Everyone charged with a criminal offence has the following minimum rights:
  - a. To be informed promptly, in a language which he understands and in detail, of the nature and cause of the accusation against him;
  - b. To have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defense;
  - c. To defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing or, if he has not sufficient means to pay for legal assistance, to be given it free when the interests of justice so require;
  - d. To examine or have examined witnesses against him and to obtain the attendance and examination of witnesses on his behalf under the same conditions as witnesses against him;
  - e. To have the free assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand or speak the language used in court.

## **ARTICLE 7**

### ***No punishment without law***

1. No one shall be held guilty of any criminal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a criminal offence under national or international law at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the criminal offence was committed.
2. This Article shall not prejudice the trial and punishment of any person for any act or omission which, at the time when it was committed, was criminal according to the general principles of law recognised by civilised nations.

## **ARTICLE 8**

### ***Right to respect for private and family life***

1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.
2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

## **ARTICLE 9**

### ***Freedom of thought, conscience and religion***

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.
2. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

## **ARTICLE 10**

### ***Freedom of expression***

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This Article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.
2. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.

## **ARTICLE 11**

### ***Freedom of assembly and association***

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.
2. No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This Article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State.

## **ARTICLE 12**

### ***Right to marry***

Men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and to found a family, according to the national laws governing the exercise of this right.

## **ARTICLE 14**

### ***Prohibition of discrimination***

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

**Protocol 1**

**ARTICLE 1**

***Protection of property***

Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law.

The preceding provisions shall not, however, in any way impair the right of a State to enforce such laws as it deems necessary to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest or to secure the payment of taxes or other contributions or penalties.

**Protocol 1**

**ARTICLE 2**

***Right to education***

No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

**Protocol 1**

**ARTICLE 3**

***Right to free elections***

The High Contracting Parties undertake to hold free elections at reasonable intervals by secret ballot, under conditions which will ensure the free expression of the opinion of the people in the choice of the legislature.

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