

<b>Title:</b> <b>Regulation of Rescue and Rehoming Organisations</b>	<b>Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)</b>	
	<b>Date: April 2026</b>	
	<b>Type of measure: Secondary Legislation</b>	
<b>Lead department or agency:</b> <b>Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)</b>	<b>Stage: Consultation</b>	
	<b>Source of intervention: Domestic NI</b>	
<b>Other departments or agencies:</b>	<b>Contact details:</b> Animal Welfare and Dog Control Policy Branch	
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### Summary Intervention and Options

<b>What is the problem under consideration? Why is government intervention necessary?</b> Rescue and rehoming organisations in Northern Ireland are not currently subject to any statutory minimum requirements, unlike other animal-related establishments such as pet shops, dog breeding establishments, and boarding kennels, which must be inspected and licensed by local councils. Although the majority of rescue and rehoming providers operate to high standards and have the best interests of animals at heart, there are no uniform legal minimum standards nor an official register of organisations operating within the sector. This regulatory gap allows anyone to establish a rescue or rehoming service without oversight.	
<b>What are the policy objectives and the intended effects?</b> The overarching policy aims to protect and promote an established minimum standard of welfare for animals in the care of these organisations across Northern Ireland. This will provide transparency, accountability, and traceability around how these organisations look after and rehome animals within their care. This policy is aimed to be proportionate so as not to unduly burden smaller organisations. This policy will also facilitate alignment with EU Animal Health Law (AHL) requirements and takes cognisance of European Commission proposals on the welfare and traceability of dogs and cats.	
<b>What policy options have been considered, including any alternatives to regulation? Please justify preferred option (further details in Evidence Base) (10 lines maximum)</b> The four options which were considered are: <b>Option 1:</b> Do nothing i.e., no regulation of rescue and rehoming organisations. <b>Option 2:</b> Registration scheme aligned with current self-regulation, such as adopting Association of Dog and Cats Home (ADCH) standards and registers, offering sector-based standards but lacking legal enforceability, central oversight, and full compliance with European obligations. <b>Option 3:</b> Benchmark licensing requirements to those of leading sector organisations like Dogs Trust or Cats Protection, setting the bar at a world-class level but potentially excluding smaller organisations unable to meet such aspirational standards due to financial constraints. This approach would exceed both domestic and European welfare standards but might threaten the viability of valued, less-resourced organisations in the sector. <b>Option 4:</b> An inspection and licensing regime, requiring centres to obtain a licence after inspection, ensuring alignment with EU standards and increasing transparency, although it would introduce additional administrative costs. Option 4 is the preferred option.	
<b>Will the policy be reviewed?</b> Yes	<b>If applicable, set review date:</b> 5-10 years post implementation

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	£0.017m

<b>Does Implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?</b>	<b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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<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"/>
<b>Are any of these organisations in scope?</b>	<b>Micro</b> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Small</b> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Medium</b> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
		<b>Large</b> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

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

Approved by:      Date:

Description: Do nothing

**ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT (Option 1)**

Costs (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy)		Average Annual (recurring) (excl. transitional) (constant price)	Total Cost (Present Value)
	(constant price)	Years		
Low	Optional		Optional	Optional
High	Optional		Optional	Optional
Best Estimate				

**Description and scale of key monetised costs by ‘main affected groups’** Maximum 5 lines  
N/A

**Other key non-monetised costs by ‘main affected groups’** Maximum 5 lines  
Rescue and rehoming organisations that fail to ensure animal welfare create significant public costs, including veterinary fees for animals ranging from £60 to £300 depending on treatment required. Charities and councils incur additional expenses caring for animals with welfare issues which have come from an irresponsible rescue and rehoming organisations. Councils may have to seize animals and incur costs including, but are not limited to, transportation, kennelling, and prosecution. Biosecurity risks and loss of public trust are further consequences when welfare standards are not maintained.

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

**Description and scale of key monetised benefits by ‘main affected groups’** Maximum 5 lines  
N/A

**Other key non-monetised benefits by ‘main affected groups’** Maximum 5 lines  
The majority of rescue and rehoming providers operate to high standards and have the best interests of animals at heart. But because there are no legal uniform minimum standards nor an official register of organisations operating within the sector, there is “room for improvement”.

**Key Assumptions, Sensitivities, Risks** Maximum 5 lines  
It is estimated that the upper number of rescue and rehoming organisations currently in operation is 68 ( this is the number registered with the Charity Commission for the purposes of animal welfare, however not all of these will be rescue and rehoming organisations), and that many of these already operate at, or close to ADCH equivalent standards. This option works for animal welfare on the assumption that rescue and rehoming organisations are fulfilling their requirements under the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 (WOAA) which includes the need for the organisation to cater for the five needs. This option does not provide additional safeguards as there would be no checks on the suitability of persons or premises, no centralised register or organisations and no increase in accountability or transparency. There is a risk for the public of adopting an animal with health or behavioural issues.

**BUSINESS ASSESSMENT (Option )**

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

**Cross Border Issues (Option )**

**How does this option compare to other UK regions and to other EU Member States (particularly Republic of Ireland)** Maximum 3 lines  
Animal welfare is a devolved matter. There is currently no regulation of rescue and rehoming organisations in England, Wales or the Republic of Ireland. Scotland is the only part of the UK that currently requires animal rescue centres to hold a licence to operate.

**ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT (Option 2)**

Costs (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy) (constant price) Years		Average Annual (recurring) (excl. transitional) (constant price)	Total Cost (Present Value)
Low	£10k		£13.4K	£23.4K
High	£150k		£26.8K	£176.8K
Best Estimate	£10k		£17K	£27K

**Description and scale of key monetised costs by ‘main affected groups’** Maximum 5 lines  
 A registration scheme would require Rescue and rehoming organisations to adhere to registration conditions and pay a fee for registration, (est low £50, high £100 annual fee). Councils would be required to administer registrations, publish a register which could be achieved by publishing a pdf on website (minimal cost) or by creating an online register which register typically includes: a database, a public search page, an admin portal, authentication/security and hosting with ongoing support (est. £150k based on low numbers of organisations to be captured and potential to link in with other systems).

**Other key non-monetised costs by ‘main affected groups’** Maximum 5 lines  
 This option proposed a registration scheme only, which would not require an inspection, thereby reducing the burden on council resource. There may be costs for some organisations associated with meeting registration conditions, but it is not possible to quantify these. Financial implications would be administering registrations, publishing an online register and investigating any reports of breaches.

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
Best Estimate				

**Description and scale of key monetised benefits by ‘main affected groups’** Maximum 5 lines  
 N/A

**Other key non-monetised benefits by ‘main affected groups’** Maximum 5 lines  
 A Registration scheme, with public register would provide public confidence and transparency. It would create uniform standards, consistent approach to care and welfare across the sector, ensure the need for operators to strive towards ongoing compliance. It would also provide legitimacy for organisations and potentially increase donations as a result.

**Key Assumptions, Sensitivities, Risks** Maximum 5 lines  
 It is estimated that the upper number of rescue and rehoming organisations currently in operation is 68 ( this is the number registered with the Charity Commission for the purposes of animal welfare, however not all of these will be rescue and rehoming organisations), and that many of these already operate at, or close to ADCH equivalent standards. For this option, without inspection, rescue and rehoming organisations would be effectively self-regulating and enforcement would be reactive as opposed to a proactive inspection. There is a risk that these organisations, caring for a number of animals are not meeting animal welfare standards and there is a reliance on public reporting concerns. Without inspection it does not provide additional safeguards.

**BUSINESS ASSESSMENT (Option 2)**

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

**Cross Border Issues (Option )**

**How does this option compare to other UK regions and to other EU Member States (particularly Republic of Ireland)** Maximum 3 lines

Animal welfare is a devolved matter. There is currently no regulation of rescue and rehoming organisations in England, Wales or the Republic of Ireland. Scotland is the only part of the UK that currently requires animal rescue centres to hold a licence to operate.

**Summary: Analysis and Evidence**

**Policy Option 3**

Description: Gold standard licensing scheme for rescue and rehoming organisations

**ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT (Option 3)**

Costs (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy) (constant price)	Years	Average Annual (recurring) (excl. transitional) (constant price)	Total Cost (Present Value)
<b>Low</b>	<b>£432k</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>£2.07M</b>	<b>£2.5M</b>
<b>High</b>	<b>£666.5k</b>		<b>£3.89M</b>	<b>£4.5M</b>
<b>Best Estimate</b>				

**Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups'** Maximum 5 lines

This option would require rescue and rehoming organisations to obtain a licence. The licence conditions would require operators to meet the gold standard for animal welfare, resulting in additional staff costs (est £100k), increased veterinary costs (£40k), training costs (1 officer per council for 3 day training - £11k), enhanced premises (region of £20k-£50k depending on needs). Councils would be required to carry out inspections, have inspectors trained and accredited, there would be increased inspection frequency, administrative workload (estimated to take twice as long as inspection under option 4 (£80x2) £160 x 68 organisations = £10,880). The online register would also capture more information and issue reminders, payment processing (est £600k).

**Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups'** Maximum 5 lines

This would place stringent inspection requirements on councils before issuing a licence and would therefore be more resource intensive, with additional time required for staff to process applications, inspections, reports and follow ups. Rescue and rehoming organisations would have more compliance paperwork to complete, reducing capacity to care for animals, additional time to familiarise with requirements. This could reduce capacity for rescuing more animals and may deter volunteers. They may require expert advice to assist with meeting licence conditions and inspections.

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

**Description and scale of key monetised benefits by 'main affected groups'** Maximum 5 lines

N/A

**Other key non-monetised benefits by 'main affected groups'** Maximum 5 lines

This approach would ensure welfare standards in Northern Ireland surpass both domestic and European requirements, making them among the best globally. It would enhance rigour and transparency, guaranteeing that only legitimate organisations conduct rehoming. The public would benefit from a trusted portal, ensuring donations are secure. Councils would save on investigations and vet bills due to regular inspections and early intervention, resulting in fewer welfare prosecutions. The overall benefit is not possible to quantify.

**Key Assumptions, Sensitivities, Risks** Maximum 5 lines

It is estimated that the upper number of rescue and rehoming organisations currently in operation is 68 ( this is the number registered with the Charity Commission for the purposes of animal welfare, however not all of these will be rescue and rehoming organisations), and that many of these already operate at, or close to ADCH equivalent standards The drawback of this option is that not all organisations in Northern Ireland will have the financial resource available to construct premises to 'gold standard'. Neither will these organisations have the operating income to sustain the required level of staff, increased licence fees and inspection frequency. Organisations in the sector have routinely approached this Department and the wider Executive for assistance to address fund raising short falls. A set of standards which are stretching or aspirational could cause several valued organisations to cease operating.

**BUSINESS ASSESSMENT (Option )**

<b>Direct Impact on business (Equivalent Annual) £m</b>				
<b>Costs:</b>	<b>Benefits:</b>	<b>Net:</b>		

**Cross Border Issues (Option )****How does this option compare to other UK regions and to other EU Member States (particularly Republic of Ireland)** Maximum 3 lines

Animal welfare is a devolved matter. There is currently no regulation of rescue and rehoming organisations in England, Wales or the Republic of Ireland. Scotland is the only part of the UK that currently requires animal rescue centres to hold a licence to operate.

**Summary: Analysis and Evidence****Policy Option 4**

Description: Licencing scheme for rescue and rehoming organisations (preferred option)

**ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT (Option 4)**

<b>Costs (£m)</b>	<b>Total Transitional (Policy)</b> (constant price) Years		<b>Average Annual (recurring)</b> (excl. transitional) (constant price)	<b>Total Cost</b> (Present Value)
<b>Low</b>	<b>£34.2K</b>		<b>£35.8K</b>	<b>£70K</b>
<b>High</b>	<b>£213k</b>		<b>£1.38M</b>	<b>£1.59M</b>
<b>Best Estimate</b>	<b>£34.2K</b>		<b>£35.8K</b>	<b>£70K</b>

**Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups'** Maximum 5 lines

The main affected groups are local councils and rescue and rehoming organisations and will be required to pay a licence fee. A broad estimate for licence fees (based on the current fees for dog breeding establishment licences) is £250. (£250 x 68 organisations = £17,000). Councils will be required to administer and enforce the licensing scheme. Therefore, staff and resources will be required to process licence applications and renewals and the associated initial and annual inspections. They will also be required to maintain and publish a public register of licensed centres and undertake enforcement action where necessary. This could be delivered by uploading a pdf online or an online register which typically includes: a database, a public search page, an admin portal, authentication/security and hosting with ongoing support (est. £100k based on low numbers of organisations to be captured and potential to link in with other systems). These costs will vary in council areas depending on the numbers of R&R organisation and staffing capacity. Those not currently operating at a satisfactory level will have costs associated with meeting the minimum welfare and operational conditions (e.g., record keeping), providing veterinary oversight and staff/ volunteer training to meet competency requirements. These costs will vary on the size of the organisation, existing standards and numbers of animals.

**Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups'** Maximum 5 lines

There will be administrative and time burdens on both main affected groups, for rescue and rehoming organisations to submit applications, prepare for inspections, keep records updated and maintain compliance with licence conditions. This is likely to have a more significant impact on smaller rescue organisations, which may need to revise current practices and policies around the number of animals they can accept. There may be reputational damage if a rescue organisation doesn't meet licence requirements.

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

**Description and scale of key monetised benefits by ‘main affected groups’** Maximum 5 lines

**Other key non-monetised benefits by ‘main affected groups’** Maximum 5 lines

The policy aims to improve animal welfare, therefore by ensuring consistent minimum welfare standards and regular inspections, the policy should reduce the incidence of welfare incidents, sickness and veterinary treatment. The policy will bring organisations into a statutory framework, reducing opportunities for fraudulent or commercial activity acting as a rescue.

**Key Assumptions, Sensitivities, Risks** Maximum 5 lines

It is estimated that the upper number of rescue and rehoming organisations currently in operation is 68 ( this is the number registered with the Charity Commission for the purposes of animal welfare, however not all of these will be rescue and rehoming organisations), and that many of these already operate at, or close to ADCH equivalent standards. It is assumed that councils can apply existing animal welfare expertise to administer and enforce a licensing regime. There is a risk that the new regulation will place a burden on smaller organisations, potentially reducing rehoming capacity, or closure. Such outcomes could lead to a decrease in the overall capacity for animal rescue and rehoming in the region, possibly leaving more animals without suitable care or homes. There is a risk that licence fees may not fully offset councils’ administrative and inspection costs, especially in areas with many or complex rescue and rehoming operations. Councils could be left with shortfall in income which could place additional strain on council budgets and resources, potentially affecting the quality and frequency of inspections and enforcement. Some organisations may perceive regulation as punitive, affecting sector morale and generating negative feedback, undermining the intended benefits of increased transparency, accountability, and public confidence in licensed rescue and rehoming operations. The new regulations are not meant to require a license for everyone who occasionally helps a stray or injured animal. However, if someone regularly takes in many such animals, issues may quickly develop. Even with good intentions, we believe these individuals should be licensed so that local authorities can offer guidance and step in as needed to prevent problems from becoming serious.

#### **BUSINESS ASSESSMENT (Option )**

**Direct Impact on business (Equivalent Annual) £m**

**Costs:**

**Benefits:**

**Net:**

#### **Cross Border Issues (Option )**

**How does this option compare to other UK regions and to other EU Member States (particularly Republic of Ireland)** Maximum 3 lines

Animal welfare is a devolved matter. Scotland is the only part of the UK that currently requires animal rescue centres to hold a licence to operate. The UK and Welsh Government have also announced that they will consult on introducing a licensing regime. There is currently no regulation of R&R in Republic of Ireland.

## Evidence Base

### Problem under consideration

Rescue and rehoming organisations in Northern Ireland are not currently subject to any statutory minimum requirements, unlike other animal-related establishments such as pet shops, dog breeding establishments, and boarding kennels, which must be inspected and licensed by local councils. Without proper rules, rogue traders, backyard breeders, and well-meaning but unqualified individuals are all putting dogs at risk of neglect, illness, and even death. The situation remains that there is nothing to deter any person or organisation establishing a rescue and rehoming centre meaning:

- Individuals without proper qualifications or knowledge may engage in these activities, potentially jeopardizing the well-being of animals under their care.
- Animal welfare can be at risk if animals are housed in inadequate facilities or poor conditions. Since rehoming is currently unregulated, some people might pose as pet sellers to avoid needing a pet shop licence.
- Additionally, there is a danger that animals brought into Northern Ireland for rehoming—legally or illegally—could introduce diseases not usually present in the region.
- It is therefore essential to maintain transparency and accountability within the sector to ensure that, should animal welfare concerns arise, those responsible receive guidance, support, or are held accountable when necessary.

The Departments Animal Welfare Pathway 2025-27 committed to examining the case for inspecting and licensing rescue and rehoming organisations.

### Rationale for intervention

Although the majority of rescue and rehoming providers operate to high standards and have the best interests of animals at heart, there are no legal uniform minimum standards nor an official register of organisations operating within the sector. This regulatory gap allows anyone to establish a rescue or rehoming service without oversight, risking overcrowding, neglect and unintentional harm.

Therefore, there is an identified need to bring transparency and accountability to rescue and rehoming. Making these organisations subject to a licensing and inspection regime will deliver this and ensure that where animal welfare issues arise those responsible can be held accountable and/or be provided with advice and support to address any such issues.

Currently, Scotland is the only part of the UK that currently requires animal rescue centres to hold a licence to operate. However, the UK and Welsh Government also recognise the need for the sector to be regulated and have committed to consulting on introducing a licensing regime.

### Policy objective

The overarching policy aims to protect and promote animal welfare standards across the rescue and rehoming sector. It will provide transparency, accountability, and traceability within organisations operating within Northern Ireland.

As rescue and rehoming organisations are currently unregulated, the true number of premises in operation are unknown, however as noted for the purpose of this assessment, an upper estimate of 68 is being used. There are a number of well-established and well-known charities that operate such facilities in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Companion Animal Welfare Group, which requires members to meet Association of Dogs and Cats Homes standards includes:

- Assisi Animal Sanctuary
- Causeway Coast Dog Rescue
- Cats Protection
- Dogs Trust

- Mid Antrim Animal Sanctuary
- Rainbow rehoming
- Rosies Trust
- Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

### **Option 1**

This option would make no changes, and assumes that rescue and rehoming organisations are fulfilling their requirements under the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 (WOAA) which includes the need for the organisation to cater for the five animal welfare needs. This option does not provide additional safeguards as there would be no checks on the suitability of persons or premises, no centralised register or organisations and no increase in accountability or transparency.

### **Option 2**

This option is a registration scheme only, which would not require an inspection, thereby reducing the burden on council resource. Financial implications would be administering registrations, publishing an online register and investigating any reports of breaches.

### **Option 3**

This would place stringent inspection requirements on councils before issuing a licence. It would therefore be more resource intensive increasing financial impact on councils. The financial impact on rescue and rehoming organisations would be felt more acutely, as the licence conditions for this option would be much more stringent, such as potentially requiring an on site vet.

### **Option 4 (preferred option)**

An inspection and licensing regime, using the powers in Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the WoAA 2011 Act) to require rescue and rehoming organisations to obtain a licence to maintain or commence operations. Under the WoAA 2011 Act, a premises must be inspected before a licence can be granted. Following consideration of thresholds for licensing in Scotland (rehoming four or more animals within a 12 month period), Animal Health Law, and proposed EU standards (requiring all organisations keeping more than 10 dogs and more than 20 cats to be inspected and placed on a publicly accessible register) this option proposes a threshold of four animals rehomed within a 12 month period. Again, taking cognisance of EU requirements and mirroring the approach taken in the Petshops (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2000 and current Scottish legislation, additional requirements around maintaining records and an annual unannounced visit by official veterinarian will also be included.

This option would mandate that the total number of animals kept for the activity at any time must not exceed the maximum that is reasonable taking into account the facilities and numbers of employed staff and volunteers on any premises on which the licensable activity is carried out.

Furthermore, it would require a sufficient number of competent staff or volunteers and training policies to be in place. The rescue and rehoming organisation must provide an environment which is suitable for the species kept and their condition, so that they can express their natural behaviours, have access to water, light and ventilation as needed. Animals must be kept in housing that minimises stress, including stress from other animals or the public. Dangerous wild animals (if held) must be kept in secure, lockable housing suitable to the species.

There would also be requirements to

- keep premises clean and disinfected to prevent diseases
- have appropriate, self-contained isolation facilities for the care of sick, injured or potentially infectious animals
- feed animals a suitable diet, provided with enrichment and not be left unattended in conditions that are likely to cause distress.
- to keep a register covering all animals held at the establishment.
- to rehome animals such as dogs, cats or horses, adverts must include a photo and, where known, the animal's age. The licence number and issuing authority must be recorded.

- provide the person rehoming the animal with full information about care, husbandry, and veterinary care; a suitably trained person must be available to provide advice; and the prospective new keeper must be given known details of the animal (age, sex, vet history).

The drawbacks of this option include increased bureaucracy. However, it is worth noting that the sector has called for Government regulation and burdens could be minimised by ensuring that the licencing requirements match the conditions already established by ADCH.

## **COSTS ASSESSMENT**

### **Option 1 – do nothing**

Under this option, the public face costs of treating animals rehomed from an organisation fronting as a rescue and rehoming organisation, which wasn't ensuring welfare of animal. Veterinary costs are estimated to range from basic examination (£60) to full range of testing such as bloods, x rays, antibiotics, dressings (£200-300). Charities also bear these costs for treating animals from irresponsible rescue and rehoming organisations, with staff which have little to no training in how to care for animals. For councils' welfare issues would usually be detected later, following public reporting concerns. Councils face increased costs responding to complaints and investigating concerns. If an animal needs to be seized, there are transportation costs, kennelling costs and veterinary fees associated. The daily costs are estimated to be in the region of £15-£25 for dogs and £10-£15 for cats. It is not possible to estimate on total cost as there are no statistics available on the numbers of animals dealt with annually. Prosecution in such cases brings costs for legal fees, court time and expert reports if required. Biosecurity and disease risk is a concern, as the transfer and rehoming of animals can introduce and spread infections both among pets (and potentially to humans). This, in turn, leads to increased veterinary costs. Public trust in rescue and rehoming organisations may be undermined if welfare standards are not upheld, while the credibility of such organisations is also at stake.

### **Option 2 – Registration Scheme**

A registration scheme would require rescue and rehoming organisations to meet specified conditions and pay an annual fee (£50-£100). Councils would manage registrations and publish a register, either as a PDF (£20k) or an online system (£150k), including a database, search page, admin portal, security, hosting, and support. Council IT costs are estimated at £20k-£200k one-time setup, plus £10k yearly maintenance and £10k-£20k in administration expenses. Recurring costs include a £50-£100 registration fee per organisation.

### **Option 3 – Gold standard licensing**

This proposal would require rescue and rehoming organisations to obtain a licence, with conditions designed to meet the highest standards of animal welfare. Compliance would entail additional staffing costs for rescue and rehoming organisations (estimated at £100,000), increased veterinary expenses (£40,000), training for one officer per council over three days (£11,000), and improvements to premises (ranging from £20,000 to £50,000, depending on requirements). Councils would be responsible for conducting inspections, ensuring inspectors are properly trained and accredited, and increasing both inspection frequency and administrative workload (estimated to double the time required compared to Option 4, resulting in £10,880 for 68 organisations at £160 each). The online register would collect more detailed information, facilitate reminders, and handle payment processing (estimated at £600,000).

### **One-off costs**

- Council IT system: £400,000–£600,000
- Rescue and rehoming premises upgrades: £20,000–£50,000
- Council staff training:
  - Low estimate: 1 Animal Welfare Officer × 11 councils × 3 days = £11,000
  - High estimate: 1 Animal Welfare Officer × 11 councils × 5 days = £16,500

### **Recurring costs**

- Council inspections: £160 × 68 = £10,900 (High: £320 × 68 = £21,800)
- Council administration: £10,000–£20,000
- IT maintenance: £20,000–£40,000
- Licence fee:

- Low: £250 × 68 = £17,000
- High: £350 × 68 = £23,800
- Veterinary fees: £600 per organisation annually = £40,100 (High: £1,000 × 68 = £68,000)
- Additional staff:
  - One per organisation at £20,000 per annum = £1.36 million
  - Two per organisation at £20,000 per annum = £2.72 million
- Staff training:
  - Three staff per organisation, three days = £612,000
  - Three staff per organisation, five days = £1 million

#### **Option 4 (preferred option)**

##### *Non-public sector organisations*

Determining the cost of licensing for rescue and rehoming organisations that are currently unregulated is challenging. Licence fees to be charged will be set by local councils across Northern Ireland and, if based on full cost recovery, may vary from application to application. However, a broad estimate for fees (based on the current fees for dog breeding establishment licences) is £250.

**£250 x 68 organisations = £17,000**

A lead in time will be provided for councils and rescue and rehoming organisations to prepare for the new requirements and seek guidance to ensure meet licence standards.

We estimate the familiarisation costs (for the organisation to learn new requirements) would equate to one staff member taking two hours to learn the new regulations and requirements. Taking the average hourly rate of £12.70 and estimating 68 organisations potentially impacted:

**2hrs x Average hourly wage £12.70 x 68 organisations = £1727.20**

The proposed licence conditions are considered to be proportionate, so as not to place high resource burden on rescue and rehoming organisations whilst ensuring the welfare needs of the animals are being met, and providing accountability and transparency for public via the public register.

##### *Public sector organisations*

The legislation will require all rescue and rehoming organisations (rehoming more than four animals annually) to be inspected and licensed. There will therefore be a requirement on councils to consider applications and to inspect the premises associated with any application. Licenses will also periodically need renewing, and the consultation is seeking views on appropriate frequency of these. While there will clearly be a cost associated with this, the legislation would make provision for the local authority to charge a reasonable fee to cover the cost of delivering these services and accordingly the cost to the local authorities should be minimal. For the purposes of this Impact Assessment, an estimated standard cost model for an animal welfare inspection undertaken by a council Animal Welfare Officer (AWO) is set out below.

- Mid-point AWO salary (estimated)<sup>1</sup> £28,500 per annum
- Implied hourly rate (37 hrs/week): est. £14.80 per hour
- On-costs (employer NI, pension etc., assumed 35%): est. £5.20 per hour
- Total staff cost per hour: est. £20.00

A standard inspection case is assumed to involve approximately:

- 0.5 hours initial case handling
- hour travel (return journey)
- hour on-site inspection
- 0.5 hours post-inspection administration

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<sup>1</sup> [NJC Pay Offer 2025 - Northern Ireland.pdf](#)

Total time per standard inspection = 3.0 hours, giving a staff cost of £60.

With an indicative mileage cost of £9 per visit and an overhead allowance of 20%, this gives a total estimated cost per standard inspection of approximately **£80** per initial inspection.

Operational costs are expected to encompass staff salaries for animal welfare officers who will be required to conduct annual inspections, as well as costs associated with administration of the licensing administration, handling reports or complaints, and the ongoing monitoring and reporting required to maintain effective oversight.

Working on the estimate that 68 rescue and rehoming organisations would be within scope (assuming even distribution across council areas, meaning each council would have to inspect and licence approx. six organisations  $£80 \times 6 = £480$ ). Councils already carry out this function for dog breeding establishments, with annual inspections. Councils will have powers to set fees and can therefore set the licence fee at a level that is cost recovering and helps them fund their services.

It is expected that one Animal Welfare Officer per council would be responsible for carrying out inspection and any associated reports / follow up action / investigations of breaches / prosecutions etc. However, councils could decide to deliver this function on a regional basis and maximise use of resources across a number of council areas.

Councils will also be required to publish a register of all licensed rescue and rehoming organisations. This could be achieved by publishing a pdf on the relevant council website, or developing IT systems for an online register with search functionality, automatic updates, online processing of applications etc.

Lowest cost option would be to publish a pdf would require staff to prepare list of licensed organisations and upload to council website review and update the list following licence renewals / suspensions / data amendments. The highest cost option would be an enhanced online system with a database, a public search page, an admin portal, authentication/security and hosting with ongoing support. The project will require full scoping, customisation, security requirements to understand true cost and ensure it meets business needs. A crude estimate, extrapolated from costs to deliver a similar system in another department, is estimated to cost in region of £100k based on low numbers of organisations to be captured and potential to link in with other systems.

#### **DAERA**

The Department will absorb costs associated with the development and implementation of the policy within business-as-usual resource. The costs include staff time to develop the policy, carry out public consultation, analyse responses, bring necessary legislation forward and develop supporting guidance for councils. No ongoing or significant operational costs are anticipated; enforcement responsibilities will sit with local councils under current arrangements in the WoAA 2011.

### **BENEFITS ASSESSMENT**

#### **Option 1 – do nothing**

Most rescue and rehoming organisations maintain high standards and genuinely care about animal welfare. However, the lack of licensing and inspection or an official register for organisations in this sector means there is still "room for improvement."

#### **Option 2 – Registration Scheme**

A Registration scheme, with public register would provide public confidence and transparency. It would provide legitimacy for organisations and potentially increase donations as a result.

#### **Option 3 – Gold standard licensing**

The benefit of this approach is that it would meet and exceed all current domestic and European welfare standards. It would require the sector in Northern Ireland to meet cutting edge requirements and welfare standards would be amongst the best in the world. This would increase rigour, provide transparency and ensure that rehoming operations are only conducted by legitimate parties. Members of the public would have access to a portal of trusted organisations and will be reassured that any donations are going to a

reputable organisation. There would be savings for councils in terms of investigations, enforcement proceedings when a welfare issue is reported, as these should be prevented under the regular inspections and stringent requirements (vet bills and kennelling costs – est £12 per day + £60). Veterinary bills would be reduced for both councils and rescue and rehoming organisations. There would be less welfare cases requiring prosecution, due to early intervention. It is not possible to quantify the total benefit estimate.

#### **Option 4 (preferred option)**

##### *non-public sector organisations*

The regulation of registered charities not only supports the advancement of welfare standards within these organisations but also fosters enhanced accountability and transparency for those which raise funds from the public. Therefore, public confidence in licensed rescue and rehoming organisations will be increased; and may potentially increase financial contributions towards supporting their work.

##### *Public sector organisations*

For councils, bringing rescue and rehoming organisations fills a regulatory gap and will assist in delivering their animal welfare responsibilities. Having a list of licensed organisations, will make it easier to identify non-compliance, saving resources on investigation and improving public confidence. In the absence of adequate, consistent and targeted regulation, local councils (as the enforcement body) are often constrained in their ability to intervene where needed.

##### *DAERA*

The benefits of this option include that the legislation would align with AHL and EU requirements and requirements could be aligned with established and accepted good practice already contained in the ADCH guidelines. Would increase rigour, provide transparency and ensure that rehoming operations are only conducted by legitimate parties.

##### *Public*

The general public will be assured and confident that they are rehoming an animal from a legitimate rescue and rehoming organisation. Those who provide donations to these organisations can also be confident that they are funding a legitimate and officially licenced rescue and rehoming organisation.

#### **Benefits > Costs**

##### *Benefits*

The overarching objective is to improve animal welfare. Regulation will help to protect vulnerable animals and ensure that minimum, consistent, standards are being met. This will also support biosecurity and disease control and should therefore result in less animals requiring veterinary attention.

Whilst option two has lowest cost for implementation, it relies on self-regulation by rescue and rehoming organisations and reactive enforcement based on public reporting. This approach lacks inspections and therefore does not offer additional safeguards, leaving animal welfare standards at risk. Option three, while setting ambitious "gold standard" requirements could financially overwhelm many organisations, potentially forcing valued groups to cease operations due to unsustainable staffing, licensing, and inspection demands. Option four, the preferred option, introduces licensing for individuals who regularly take in multiple animals, allowing local authorities to provide guidance and intervene, when necessary, thus preventing minor issues from escalating.

Although a licensing regime is slightly more expensive than registration, it strikes a balance between affordability and effective oversight. Licensing organisations who rehome more than four animals within a 12-month period enables authorities to support and monitor, ensuring animal welfare needs are properly met. This approach is proportionate, addressing the risks associated with unregulated care without imposing excessive financial burdens on organisations. Ultimately, option four is necessary to safeguard animal welfare, offering a practical solution that meets regulatory requirements without the drawbacks of under-regulation or unattainable standards.

Charities that are already operating at a high standard will be relatively unaffected by the regulations; rather, regulation will help to highlight organisations that do not meet established standards. Therefore, regulation plays a valuable role in encouraging accountability, transparency, and trust from the public.

Regulation will prevent rogue traders, puppy farms and puppy smugglers who set up a rehoming organisation as a front for their business. Additionally, concerns exist about people who, without proper training or resources, adopt displaced animals by keeping them at home when they cannot provide adequate care.

## 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 (The Department)

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.

Proposal to introduce regulations for the licensing and inspection of Rescue and Rehoming Organisations.

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

Developing a	Policy <input checked="" 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 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.

Introduction of a statutory licensing and inspection regime for rescue and rehoming organisations.

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

The overarching policy aims to protect and promote animal welfare standards across the rescue and rehoming sector. It will introduce statutory minimum standards, inspections and licensing of rescue and rehoming organisations to:

- Protect and promote animal welfare;
- Ensure transparency, accountability and traceability; and
- Deter rogue operators.

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 Department proposes to introduce a licensing regime for rescue and rehoming organisations to protect the welfare of animals, increase transparency and accountability as well as deterring businesses who claim to be rescue and rehoming organisations.

Rescue and rehoming organisations are more likely to operate in rural areas and will be reliant on community volunteers and seek access to veterinary services. However, these are impacts felt by the organisations already and the proposed regulation should not place new, undue burdens on them. Inspections, which will be carried out in advance of a licence being granted will provide the organisations with the opportunity to seek guidance and take steps to prevent potential animal welfare issues. Regulation could increase public confidence in the organisations and may see patronage increased as a result donation.

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

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.

The policy will be applied equally across all areas of Northern Ireland; it will not impact rescue and rehoming organisations based in rural areas differently. The proposal is designed to be proportionate ensuring animal welfare whilst not placing significant burdens on organisations which could result in their closure. If this was to occur in a rural area it could create gap in provision.

The Department will seek views through public consultation to better understand the potential impacts on rural organisations and ensure that any regulatory framework is proportionate and does not unintentionally disadvantage rural stakeholders.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Education or Training in Rural Areas	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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.

The Department does not hold information on rescue and rehoming organisations. Animal welfare stakeholders have called for regulation of the sector, in particular, Northern Ireland Companion Animal Welfare Group, which consists of eight member organisations from a range of geographical locations across Northern Ireland highlighted the need for regulation at meeting with Minister Muir in 2024.

There was analysis of regulation of rescue and rehoming organisations in Scotland<sup>1</sup>, EU proposed legislation on the Welfare of Dogs and Cats and their traceability<sup>2</sup>.

Responses to Scottish consultation from 2021 have also been considered in relation to rural needs identified. The Department is undertaking a public consultation on its proposals for regulation of rescue and rehoming organisations. Feedback received from the consultation will inform its final proposals.

1. [The Animal Welfare \(Licensing of Activities Involving Animals\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2021](#)  
2. [EUR-Lex - 52023PC0769 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

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

In developing its policy, the Department has identified the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

The economic needs relate to financial sustainability of rescue and rehoming organisations. Whilst these organisations may incur higher costs to access veterinary services, the proposal requires a veterinarian to make a visit annually, to advise the organisation on animal welfare. There is therefore no requirement to bring animals to a vet, which for organisations in rural locations, may be more difficult and costly. The social needs relate to volunteer-led delivery of services, which there may be more of a reliance on for smaller organisations.

These factors may affect their ability to comply with the new regulatory requirements and may increase administrative and financial pressures they face compared with organisations in urban areas. However, regulating these organisations will increase public trust that they are accountable and transparent in their operations and may therefore increase donations and public support.

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?

N/A

## 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.

This policy will promote animal welfare across all Northern Ireland, both in urban and rural areas.

### Economic

- For many rural rescues, limited staffing, volunteer dependence and constrained financial resources could make compliance more challenging. As a result, a key concern is that some organisations may scale back their activities or close completely if regulatory requirements prove too resource intensive.
- Consideration has been given to ensuring that any regulatory framework is proportionate and does not impose unnecessary burdens on smaller or rural organisations. In reviewing the potential impacts, particular attention was paid to how rural organisations may experience the changes differently from those in urban areas.
- Animal Welfare Organisations have, been calling for some time for regulation of rescue and rehoming organisations.
- The proposals will ensure the welfare needs of the animals, deter rogue operators from presenting as a rescue and rehoming organisation and provide legitimacy to those currently in operation and which are already fulfilling all the animal's needs.

### Social

- Organisations based in rural locations may rely more heavily on volunteers to deliver their services.
- Licensing will provide assurance to the public that the organisation is transparent and accountable and may stimulate interest from new volunteers.

The Department will seek views through public consultation to better understand the potential impacts on rural organisations and ensure that any regulatory framework is proportionate and does not unintentionally disadvantage rural stakeholders.

## 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.

The key driver for the policy is to protect animal welfare, increasing transparency and accountability within the sector, deter rogue operators (businesses fronting as a rescue and rehoming charity).

The policy has been designed to be balanced to deliver these wider benefits whilst minimizing, where it is possible and appropriate, the impacts which may arise for organisations. For example, when considering what organisations are within scope, the number of animals being rehomed was a driving factor, to ensure that smaller organisations are not unnecessarily captured within the regulatory framework. These thresholds were included specifically to avoid placing disproportionate requirements on small or rural rescues operating with limited resources.

The Department also recognises the need to support all rescue and rehoming organisations, including those in rural areas, in transitioning to any new licensing and inspection requirements. Councils will be responsible for enforcing the new requirements and the Department will work closely with to provide of clear guidance and stakeholder engagement.

The Department will also use the public consultation to gather further evidence on rural impacts and consider whether additional mitigations or support measures are required.

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.

.N/A

## 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.



Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Colin Stewart
Position/Grade:	Staff Officer
Division/Branch:	Animal Welfare and Dog Control Policy Branch
Signature:	Colin Stewart
Date:	23/03/26
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	Catherine Goligher
Position/Grade:	Grade 7
Division/Branch:	Animal Welfare and Dog Control Policy Branch
Signature:	<i>Catherine Goligher</i>
Date:	14 April 2026

# Equality & Disability Duties Screening Template

December 2023 version



**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.

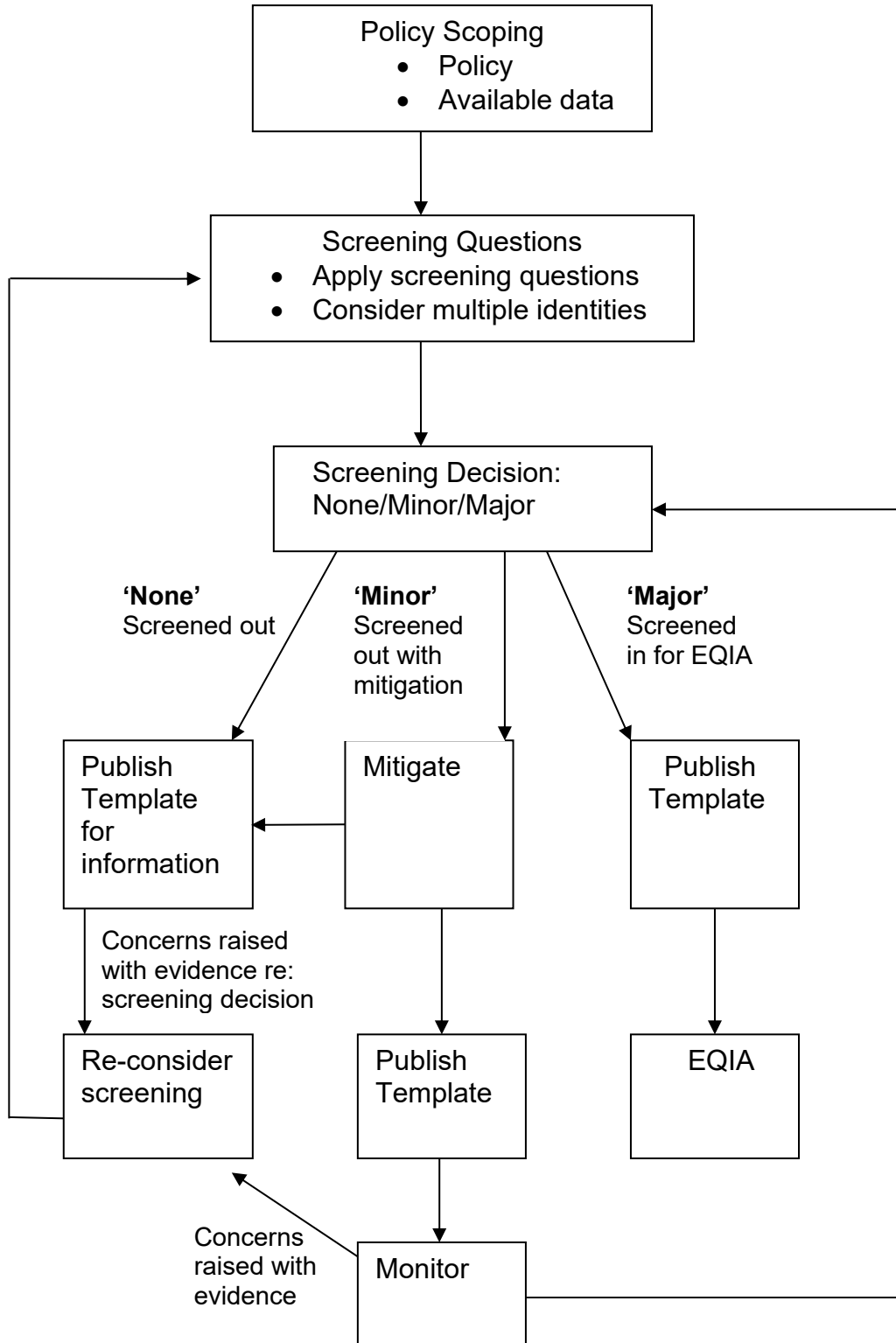
**Part 3. Screening decision** – guides the public authority to reach a screening decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA), or to introduce measures to mitigate the likely impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality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

Proposal to introduce regulation of rescue and rehoming organisations in Northern Ireland

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

New policy

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

The policy aims to introduce a statutory licensing and inspection regime for rescue and rehoming organisations in Northern Ireland to ensure consistent minimum welfare standards, improve transparency and accountability, and align with EU Animal Health Law requirements and emerging European legislation.

Currently there are no statutory minimum standards or formal oversight mechanisms for the sector, meaning any individual or organisation can establish a rescue or rehoming operation without inspection or licensing, and there is no central register of operators.

The intended outcome is to safeguard animal welfare, improve public confidence and ensure that organisations operate to appropriate and consistent standards, while helping to deter unqualified operators, poor quality premises and the misuse of “rescue” status to avoid pet-selling regulations.

**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.**

**Who initiated or wrote the policy?**

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

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

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs owns the policy and legislation, local councils implement the 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

In terms of public sector organisations impacted, councils are responsible for enforcement in relation to non-farmed animals under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. Enforcement would therefore fall to councils. Rescue and rehoming organisations, as charitable animal welfare organisations will be required to obtain a licence, pay the associated fee and comply with licensing requirements. Members of the public will be impacted

positively as the transparency and accountability required by licensing will improve public trust and confidence in rehoming an animal.

### Other policies with a bearing on this policy

**What are they?**

N/A

**Who owns them?**

N/A

### 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:**

There is no evidence to suggest that the revised policy will impact negatively on people in this category. Northern Ireland's 2021 Census shows Catholics as the largest religious group (42.31%), followed by Presbyterians (16.61%), Church of Ireland (11.55%) and Methodists (2.35%), with others identifying as

other Christians (6.85%), other religions (1.34%), no religion (17.39%), or not stating a religion (1.60%).

There is no data available on the number of rescue and rehoming organisations are currently in operation in Northern Ireland. Sixty-eight organisations are currently registered with the Charity Commission website for the purposes of animal welfare. Whilst it is not expected that all of these are rescue and rehoming organisations, 68 is being used as an upper estimate of the number which may be in operation currently.

The upcoming public consultation will allow both individuals and organisations to share their perspectives. Any matters pertaining to religious beliefs that arise during the consultation will be thoroughly evaluated when determining the final policy proposal.

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

There is no evidence to suggest that the revised policy will impact negatively on people in this category.

The 2024 NI Life & Times survey shows the political outlook in Northern Ireland, with 30% identifying as unionist, 30% as nationalist, and the largest share (35%) identifying as neither, while small minorities selected another answer (2%) or said they did not know (3%).

There is no data available on the number of rescue and rehoming organisations are currently in operation in Northern Ireland. Sixty-eight organisations are currently registered with the Charity Commission website for the purposes of animal welfare. Whilst it is not expected that all of these are rescue and rehoming organisations, 68 is being used as an upper estimate of the number which may be in operation currently.

The upcoming public consultation will allow both individuals and organisations to share their perspectives. Any matters pertaining to political opinion that

arise during the consultation will be thoroughly evaluated when determining the final policy proposal.

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

There is no evidence to suggest that the revised policy will impact negatively on people in this category.

Northern Ireland's 2021 Census shows a population of approximately 97% identifying as White, while minority ethnic groups together account for about 3% of the population; the largest of these are Indian and Chinese communities (around 0.5% each), Mixed ethnicities (0.8%), and Black ethnic groups (around 0.6%).

There is no data available on the number of rescue and rehoming organisations currently in operation in Northern Ireland. Sixty-eight organisations are currently registered with the Charity Commission website for the purposes of animal welfare. Whilst it is not expected that all of these are rescue and rehoming organisations, 68 is being used as an upper estimate of the number which may be in operation currently.

The upcoming public consultation will allow both individuals and organisations to share their perspectives. Any matters pertaining to race that arise during the consultation will be thoroughly evaluated when determining the final policy proposal.

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

There is no evidence to suggest that the revised policy will impact negatively on people in this category.

Based on Northern Ireland's Census 2021, the population age profile can be summarised as follows: 25.14% of the population are aged 0–19 years, 25.28% are 20–39 years, 26.48% are 40–59 years, 18.73% are 60–79 years,

and 4.37% are aged 80 years and over, illustrating a broadly even distribution across the working-age groups with a smaller proportion in the oldest age category.

There is no data available on the number of rescue and rehoming organisations are currently in operation in Northern Ireland. Sixty-eight organisations are currently registered with the Charity Commission website for the purposes of animal welfare. Whilst it is not expected that all of these are rescue and rehoming organisations, 68 is being used as an upper estimate of the number which may be in operation currently.

The upcoming public consultation will allow both individuals and organisations to share their perspectives. Any matters pertaining to age that arise during the consultation will be thoroughly evaluated when determining the final policy proposal.

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

There is no evidence to suggest that the revised policy will impact negatively on people in this category.

Northern Ireland's Census 2021 shows that 45.59% of the population are married, while 38.07% are single (never married or never in a civil partnership); smaller proportions are divorced (6.02%), widowed or surviving a civil partner (6.36%), separated (3.78%), and in a civil partnership (0.18%).

There is no data available on the number of rescue and rehoming organisations are currently in operation in Northern Ireland. Sixty-eight organisations are currently registered with the Charity Commission website for the purposes of animal welfare. Whilst it is not expected that all of these are rescue and rehoming organisations, 68 is being used as an upper estimate of the number which may be in operation currently.

The upcoming public consultation will allow both individuals and organisations to share their perspectives. Any matters pertaining to marital status that arise during the consultation will be thoroughly evaluated when determining the final policy proposal.

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

There is no evidence to suggest that the revised policy will impact negatively on people in this category.

Northern Ireland's Census 2021 shows that the vast majority of the population identify as straight or heterosexual (90.04%), while 2.09% identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or another sexual orientation, and 7.87% either preferred not to say or did not state their sexual orientation.

There is no data available on the number of rescue and rehoming organisations are currently in operation in Northern Ireland. Sixty-eight organisations are currently registered with the Charity Commission website for the purposes of animal welfare. Whilst it is not expected that all of these are rescue and rehoming organisations, 68 is being used as an upper estimate of the number which may be in operation currently.

The upcoming public consultation will allow both individuals and organisations to share their perspectives. Any matters pertaining to sexual orientation that arise during the consultation will be thoroughly evaluated when determining the final policy proposal.

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

There is no evidence to suggest that the revised policy will impact negatively on people in this category.

Northern Ireland's Census 2021 shows that the population is almost evenly split by sex, with females accounting for 50.81% of the population and males 49.19%.

There is no data available on the number of rescue and rehoming organisations are currently in operation in Northern Ireland. Sixty-eight organisations are currently registered with the Charity Commission website for the purposes of animal welfare. Whilst it is not expected that all of these are rescue and rehoming organisations, 68 is being used as an upper estimate of the number which may be in operation currently.

The upcoming public consultation will allow both individuals and organisations to share their perspectives. Any matters pertaining to gender that arise during the consultation will be thoroughly evaluated when determining the final policy proposal.

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

There is no evidence to suggest that the revised policy will impact negatively on people in this category.

Northern Ireland's Census 2021 shows that 55.14% of households have no residents with a limiting long-term health problem or disability, while 33.63% have one resident with a limiting condition and 11.23% have two or more residents.

There is no data available on the number of rescue and rehoming organisations are currently in operation in Northern Ireland. Sixty-eight organisations are currently registered with the Charity Commission website for the purposes of animal welfare. Whilst it is not expected that all of these are rescue and rehoming organisations, 68 is being used as an upper estimate of the number which may be in operation currently.

The upcoming public consultation will allow both individuals and organisations to share their perspectives. Any matters pertaining to disability that arise during the consultation will be thoroughly evaluated and potential mitigations considered and included in final policy as necessary when determining the final policy proposal.

### **Dependants evidence/information:**

There is no evidence to suggest that the revised policy will impact negatively on people in this category.

Northern Ireland's Census 2021 shows that just over half of households (53.15%) have no children, with a further 16.17% having no dependent children, meaning around seven in ten households do not include dependent children, while around 30% do; among those with dependent children, households most commonly have one or two children, and larger families are relatively rare, with around 6–7% of households having three or more dependent children.

There is no data available on the number of rescue and rehoming organisations are currently in operation in Northern Ireland. Sixty-eight organisations are currently registered with the Charity Commission website for the purposes of animal welfare. Whilst it is not expected that all of these are rescue and rehoming organisations, 68 is being used as an upper estimate of the number which may be in operation currently.

The upcoming public consultation will allow both individuals and organisations to share their perspectives. Any matters pertaining to dependants that arise during the consultation will be thoroughly evaluated when determining the final policy proposal.

### **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**

At present there is no evidence of needs, experience and priorities between religious belief and the statutory licensing and inspection of rescue and rehoming organisations, but the consultation may highlight something which needs to be considered.

**Political Opinion**

At present there is no evidence of needs, experience and priorities between political opinion and the statutory licensing and inspection of rescue and rehoming organisations, but the consultation may highlight something which needs to be considered.

**Racial Group**

At present there is no evidence of needs, experience and priorities between race and the statutory licensing and inspection of rescue and rehoming organisations, but the consultation may highlight something which needs to be considered.

**Age**

At present there is no evidence of needs, experience and priorities between age and the statutory licensing and inspection of rescue and rehoming organisations, but the consultation may highlight something which needs to be considered.

### **Marital status**

At present there is no evidence of needs, experience and priorities between marital status and the statutory licensing and inspection of rescue and rehoming organisations, but the consultation may highlight something which needs to be considered.

### **Sexual orientation**

At present there is no evidence of needs, experience and priorities between sexual orientation and the statutory licensing and inspection of rescue and rehoming organisations, but the consultation may highlight something which needs to be considered.

### **Men and Women Generally**

At present there is no evidence of needs, experience and priorities between gender and the statutory licensing and inspection of rescue and rehoming organisations, but the consultation may highlight something which needs to be considered.

### **Disability**

At present there is no evidence of needs, experience and priorities between disability and the statutory licensing and inspection of rescue and rehoming organisations, but the consultation may highlight something which needs to be considered.

### Dependants

At present there is no evidence of needs, experience and priorities between dependents and the statutory licensing and inspection of rescue and rehoming organisations, but the consultation may highlight something which needs to be considered.

### 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*:**

None – All rescue and rehoming organisations regardless of religious belief will be required to meet requirements regarding statutory licensing. Local councils will be required to administer and enforce the licensing regime, regardless of religious belief.

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

(select as appropriate)

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

None – All rescue and rehoming organisations regardless of political opinion will be required to meet requirements regarding statutory licensing. Local councils will be required to administer and enforce the licensing regime, regardless of religious belief.

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

(select as appropriate)

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

None – All rescue and rehoming organisations regardless of race will be required to meet requirements regarding statutory licensing. Local councils will be required to administer and enforce the licensing regime, regardless of religious belief.

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

(select as appropriate)

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

None – All rescue and rehoming organisations regardless of age will be required to meet requirements regarding statutory licensing. Local councils will be required to administer and enforce the licensing regime, regardless of religious belief.

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

(select as appropriate)

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

None – All rescue and rehoming organisations regardless of marital status will be required to meet requirements regarding statutory licensing. Local councils will be required to administer and enforce the licensing regime, regardless of religious belief.

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

(select as appropriate)

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

None – All rescue and rehoming organisations regardless of sexual orientation will be required to meet requirements regarding statutory licensing. Local councils will be required to administer and enforce the licensing regime, regardless of religious belief.

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

(select as appropriate)

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

None – All rescue and rehoming organisations regardless of gender will be required to meet requirements regarding statutory licensing. Local councils will be required to administer and enforce the licensing regime, regardless of religious belief.

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

(select as appropriate)

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

None – All rescue and rehoming organisations regardless of disability will be required to meet requirements regarding statutory licensing. We have not identified any disability groups that would be more intensely affected by the new policy. Should any be identified through consultation, the needs will be considered and mitigations and support built into the policy/ guidance where appropriate. Local councils will be required to administer and enforce the licensing regime, regardless of religious belief.

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

(select as appropriate)

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

None – All rescue and rehoming organisations regardless of dependents will be required to meet requirements regarding statutory licensing. Local councils will be required to administer and enforce the licensing regime, regardless of religious belief.

**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*:**

None - All rescue and rehoming organisations regardless of religious belief will be impacted equally with statutory licensing and inspections as no evidence suggests any religious group will be impacted due to religious beliefs.

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

(select as appropriate)

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

None - All rescue and rehoming organisations regardless of political opinion will be impacted equally with statutory licensing and inspections

as no evidence suggests any political group will be impacted due to political opinion.

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

(select as appropriate)

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

None - All rescue and rehoming organisations regardless of race will be impacted equally with statutory licensing and inspections as no evidence suggests any racial group will be impacted due to race.

**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:**

The Department has not identified any evidence to indicate such opportunities. However, the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

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

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

The Department has not identified any evidence to indicate such opportunities. However, the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

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

N/A

**If No, provide reasons:**

The Department has not identified any evidence to indicate such opportunities. However, the responses to the consultation will be monitored to inform the position.

## 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.**

There is no available evidence to indicate potential impacts on people with multiple identities. However, the responses to the consultation will be evaluated and built into final policy/ guidance as necessary.

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?**

The proposed policy does not provide an opportunity to actively increase the participation by disabled people in public life. 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 applies uniformly to organisations operating within the rescue and rehoming sector and does not directly impact individuals or Section 75 groups.

In order to identify the likely impact of the proposals on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories, the following publications were explored: the Northern Ireland Census 2021; the NI Live & Times survey 2024; the Dogs Trust’s National Dog Survey 2025, and NI council dog statistics (published on the DAERA website). This Equality and Human Rights Screening Exercise assessed the evidence relating to s75 considerations, including equality of opportunity and good relations, and Disability Duties and Human Rights.

The exercise has concluded that the policy would apply equally to all stakeholders.

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 rescue and rehoming organisations 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

## Equality & Disability Duties – Screening Template

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
-----

## 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:**

The Department will monitor feedback received through the public consultation, including any evidence relating to equality impacts and will consider and evaluate prior to finalising the policy. If, or when, legislation is introduced, the Department will monitor impacts through engagement with councils during implementation.

### **Good Relations:**

The Department will monitor feedback received through the public consultation, including any evidence relating to equality impacts. If, or when, legislation is introduced, the Department will monitor impacts through engagement with councils during implementation.

### **Disability Duties:**

The Department will monitor feedback received through the public consultation, including any evidence relating to equality impacts. If, or when, legislation is introduced, the Department will monitor impacts through engagement with councils during implementation.

## 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>	Yes/No
Prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment	<b>Article 3</b>	Yes/No
Prohibition of slavery and forced labour	<b>Article 4</b>	Yes/No
Right to liberty and security	<b>Article 5</b>	Yes/No
Right to a fair and public trial	<b>Article 6</b>	Yes/No
Right to no punishment without law	<b>Article 7</b>	Yes/No
Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence	<b>Article 8</b>	Yes/No
Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion	<b>Article 9</b>	Yes/No
Right to freedom of expression	<b>Article 10</b>	Yes/No

## Equality & Disability Duties – Screening Template

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

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

No adverse impact on human rights has 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: Colin Stewart**

**Grade: SO**

**Branch: Animal Welfare and Dog**

**Date: 24 March 2026**

**Control Policy Branch**

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

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

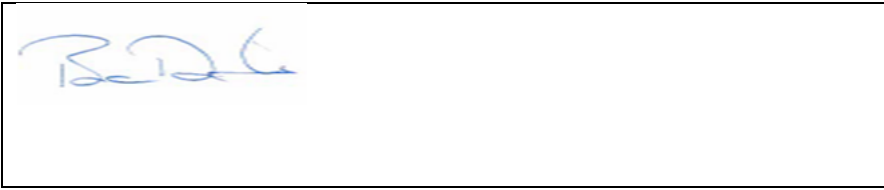
**Name: Brian Dooher**

**Grade: 3**

**Branch: VSAHG**

**Date: 16/4/26**

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



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 template must be saved to the container in **HTML format** (not PDF) in order to comply with accessibility requirements. The screening form will be placed on the DAERA website and a link provided to the Department's Section 75 consultees.



Strategic  
Management DAERA

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.

For further information:

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

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