

Title: Regulations to strengthen dog microchipping requirements.	Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)
	Date: 26 March 2026
	Type of measure: Secondary Legislation
Lead department or agency: Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA/the Department)	Stage: Initial
	Source of intervention: Domestic NI
Other departments or agencies: N/A	Contact details: Animal Welfare and Dog Control Policy Branch
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Summary Intervention and Options

<p>What is the problem under consideration? Why is government intervention necessary? (7 lines maximum)</p> <p>Dog control legislation, enforced by councils, requires owners to microchip (and licence) their dogs. When councils respond to calls about stray dogs, they attempt to reunite the animals with their owners. Where a dog is not microchipped, or details are out-of-date, and therefore cannot be reunited with its owners, councils put in place processes to impound the dog, and either locate the owner or make alternative provisions. Some dogs ultimately get rehomed, outside of Northern Ireland (NI), via shelters and other animal organisations. Intervention is necessary to afford these animals additional protections, in the form of enhanced traceability, leading to better outcomes for the animals, their owners, and for enforcement and rescue and rehoming organisations.</p> <p>As indicated in the Animal Welfare Pathway 2025-27 (DAERA Animal Welfare Pathway), Animal Welfare is a top priority for the Minister, and the Pathway sets out the Minister's commitment to explore the merits of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> bolstering the current database requirements to ensure that NI dog owners' information is recorded, accessed and utilised in line with industry standards and facilitates pet traceability; and making it an offence for dog owners to not update ownership details on microchip databases. <p>The Pathway also indicates that proposed reforms will be explored in detail with all stakeholders and subject to full public consultation.</p>
<p>What are the policy objectives and the intended effects? (7 lines maximum)</p> <p>The objective of the policy is to improve the traceability of dogs by making new rules to bolster the current dog microchipping requirements, ultimately improving the dog's welfare. Current requirements are that dogs must be microchipped either before 8 weeks of age; upon sale/transfer, or by 6 months of age; and keepers must keep records (on a microchip database) updated as soon as reasonably practicable. Database providers must record specified details, and microchip implanters must be either a veterinary surgeon or a person who has received instruction on how to implant a microchip.</p>

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

In terms of alternatives to revised regulations, it is considered that whilst publicity campaigns and guidance can support awareness, they are not a suitable alternative to legislation in this case. Changes to microchipping timeframes and requirements for updating keeper details require clear, legally enforceable provisions to ensure consistent compliance across all keepers and to support councils in delivering dog warden services.

Selection of preferred options

Option 1 – Do Nothing

Option 2 – (the preferred option): regulations to set out updated requirements regarding dog microchipping.

The new regulations will introduce a requirement for keepers to have their dog microchipped by eight weeks; keep microchip details up to date within a set timeframe, e.g. 14 days; and for breeder information to be included on the microchip database where the keeper was also the breeder.

New regulations would be made under the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983. The new regulations would be subject to negative resolution procedure in the Assembly, and they would amend Part 4 (Microchipping) of the Dogs (Licensing and Identification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012.

Will the policy be reviewed? It will be reviewed.

If applicable, set review date: This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Department.

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

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

Summary: Analysis and Evidence

Policy Option 1

Description: Do Nothing

ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT (Option 1: Do nothing)

Costs (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy) (constant price) Years	Average Annual (recurring) (excl. transitional) (constant price)	Total Cost (Present Value)
Low	0Optional	0Optional	0Optional
High	0Optional	0Optional	0Optional
Best Estimate	No transitional costs	No average annual recurring costs	No total costs

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

People who implant microchips into dogs, and dog keepers who change ownership/address, will see no additional requirements about keeping records up to date. However, councils and animal rescue organisations would continue to divert resource into dealing with unidentified, or incorrectly identified, animals.

Benefits (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy) (constant price) Years	Average Annual (recurring) (excl. transitional) (constant price)	Total Benefit (Present Value)
Low	0Optional	0 Optional	0Optional
High	0Optional	0Optional	0Optional
Best Estimate	No benefits as no action taken		0

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

Owners could continue to microchip their dogs at either before eight weeks of age; upon sale/transfer, or by six months of age; and they could decide that updating records (on a microchip database) when reasonably practicable for them could mean they will do it within months or years. Microchip databases would not be required to indicate those keepers who are also the breeders of their dogs.

Key Assumptions, Sensitivities, Risks Maximum 5 lines

Dogs not microchipped will not be licensed by local councils (due to the legislative licensing requirements) and so there exists a risk of lack of transparency for these animals. Databases not kept up-to-date with address changes mean that council reunification action for stray dogs is thwarted, and lack of breeder information may compliment poor practices in breeding dogs. There is therefore a risk of reputational damage to the Department, if it takes no action in this area.

BUSINESS ASSESSMENT (Option 1: Do nothing)

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

Cross Border Issues (Option 1: Do nothing)

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

Great Britain (GB) and the Republic of Ireland (ROI) place further requirements on implanters, database providers, and dog keepers. Devolved Administrations in each jurisdiction publish databases holding themselves as compliant with legislation, and ROI publish databases which comply with conditions set out in regulations.

Summary: Analysis and Evidence

Policy Option 2

Description: Preferred Option: Strengthen current dog microchipping requirements.

ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT (Option 2: Preferred Option - Strengthen current dog microchipping requirements.)

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

Keepers would be required to microchip their dogs by eight weeks, meaning that they would be potentially incurring the cost quicker than they do at present. They would also have a time-bound administrative burden to keep the records held on a dog microchip database, up-to-date. Microchip databases would be obliged to hold breeder details, where the keepers also bred the dog.

Benefits (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy) (constant price) Years		Average Annual (recurring) (excl. transitional) (constant price)	Total Benefit (Present Value)
Low	£0 Optional		£0 Optional	£0 Optional
High	£0 Optional		£0 Optional	£0 Optional
Best Estimate	£0		£0	£0

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

Dog owners, whose pet becomes missing, will potentially be reunited with their pet in a shorter timeframe. Councils, who enforce animal welfare and dog control legislation, will potentially have more time to deal with other issues. Animal rescue and rehoming organisations will potentially have increased capacity for dealing with other more urgent cases and see less animals coming to them for rehoming.

Key Assumptions, Sensitivities, Risks Maximum 5 lines

Based on desktop research, the Department assumes a total NI dog population of approximately 270,000, of which an estimated 67% (about 180,000 dogs) may not be microchipped. This assumption is derived from council dog control statistics on stray dogs, which indicate that 67% of seized dogs were unmicrochipped. This represents the estimated number of keepers potentially impacted by the proposed policy reform. The Department recognises the risk that, given current non-compliance, similar issues could persist under new regulations. However, this risk is expected to be reduced through an accompanying awareness campaign and clearer, time-bound obligations. The consultation will also welcome further information on costs and benefits.

BUSINESS ASSESSMENT (Option 2: Preferred Option - Strengthen current dog microchipping requirements)

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

Cross Border Issues (Option 2: Preferred Option - Strengthen current dog microchipping requirements)

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

GB & ROI place more requirements on implanters, database providers, and dog keepers. Devolved Administrations in GB each publish databases holding themselves as compliant with legislation, and ROI publish databases which comply with conditions set out in regulations.

Evidence Base

Problem under consideration, and rationale for intervention

Following engagement with animal welfare enforcement agencies, veterinary associations, agricultural bodies, and animal welfare organisations, on reforms which would have the most significant impact on enhancing animal welfare, the Animal Welfare Pathway 2025-27 ([DAERA Animal Welfare Pathway](#)), published the Minister's commitment to improving animal welfare, which included a commitment to explore the merits of:

- bolstering the current database requirements to ensure that Northern Ireland dog owners' information is recorded, accessed and utilised in line with industry standards and facilitates pet traceability; and
- making it an offence for dog owners to not update ownership details on microchip databases.

Link between dog licensing and microchipping: Microchipping of dogs is linked with licensing of dogs, and these matters are enforced by councils. The legislation in place in Northern Ireland (the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 and the Dogs (Licensing and Identification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012) specifies that a person needs a licence to keep a dog. Some exemptions are specified, for example, a licence is not required for a dog under six months who is kept by the person who also keeps/kept that dog's mother. A block licence is available to an owner of three or more dogs, as long as certain conditions are met.

The link between licensing and microchipping exists where the legislation provides that a licence must not be issued by a council unless the dog is microchipped (or exempted from microchipping by a veterinary surgeon).

Microchipping requirements: Dogs kept under a block licence must be microchipped before they reach eight weeks of age, or within seven days of arriving at the premises for which the block licence is in force. Where dogs are not kept by a person under a block licence or are not sold or otherwise transferred to another person, but kept with the mother, they must be microchipped by six months of age, as, until it reaches this age, it is not required to be kept under licence. This microchipping requirement does not apply where a certificate signed by a veterinary surgeon indicates that the effect that implantation in that dog would have an adverse effect on the health of the dog.

The microchip: Legislation sets out the technical standard for the type of microchip which must be used for the purposes of microchipping a dog. As an example, the microchip must comply with a specified ISO standard.

The implanter: The legislation specifies that the person who may implant a microchip must be either a veterinary surgeon or a person who has received instruction on how to implant a microchip. The legislation is silent as to 'instruction'.

The database of microchip records: The legislation specifies that for microchipping of a dog to be considered valid, the microchip must meet specific technical standards; and must be registered on a database, which is accessible to officers, and which holds the following information:

- the unique number generated by the microchip;
- the keeper's name and address; and at least one contact telephone number;
- in respect of the dog implanted:
 - its breed;
 - its sex;
 - colour and distinguishing marks; and
 - date of birth or estimated year of birth.

Keeping database records up to date: The competent person who carries out the microchipping must notify the database operator with details within seven days. The keeper must notify the database operator, of any changes to the keeper's name, address or telephone number, as soon as reasonably practicable.

Offences and penalties: Contravention of provisions regarding microchipping of dogs kept under a block licence, and contravention of conditions for valid microchipping, is each an offence under the 1983 Order, each subject to a penalty of up to level 3. Outside of this, these Microchipping Regulations are silent as to offences for failing to microchip a dog. It is an offence to take possession of a dog before a licence has been obtained for that dog, and it is also an offence to keep a dog without a licence. The penalty for each of these offences is a fine of up to £1,000. It is also an offence to give or sell a dog to another person, unless that other person has produced a licence for that dog. The penalty for this offence is a fine of up to £1,000.

Other jurisdictions

The Department explored current legislation in the UK and noted that it made similar provisions to the legislation in place in NI, but in addition, included further requirements for implanters, dog keepers, and microchip database providers. For example, dogs must be microchipped by eight weeks, and local authorities have the power to require a

keeper to update details held on a database within 21 days. Databases must indicate those cases where the keeper of the dog is also the person who bred the dog.

The Department considers that intervention is required to improve the traceability of dogs.

- It is noted that whilst microchipping supports the dog licensing regime, this proposed intervention does not propose to amend licensing arrangements. Licensing policy is outside the scope of this proposed intervention. Also outside the scope of this intervention is validation of individual microchips, given that it would potentially require the creation of processes to confirm accuracy across multiple databases, which would be operationally complex and burdensome for the enforcers.
- In terms of alternatives to revised regulations, it is considered that whilst publicity campaigns and guidance can support awareness, they are not a suitable alternative to legislation in this case. Changes to microchipping timeframes and requirements for updating keeper details require clear, legally enforceable provisions to ensure consistent compliance across all keepers and enable effective enforcement for councils.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objective of the policy is to improve the traceability, and ultimately the welfare, of dogs by making new rules to bolster the current microchipping requirements (which extend to dogs only).

Options considered, and their costs and benefits

OPTION 1: Do nothing

This option would see no intervention, meaning that things remain as they currently do.

OPTION 2: Strengthen current dog microchipping requirements

The new regulations will introduce a requirement for keepers to microchip their dog before it is eight weeks of age (as opposed to the current requirement to microchip before eight weeks, upon sale/transfer, or by six months); to keep microchip details up to date within a set timeframe, e.g. 14 days (as opposed to the current requirement to update details when reasonably practicable), and to require database providers to record breeder information in those cases where the keeper is also the breeder (as opposed to the current requirements which are silent on this issue)

Costs and Benefits assessment

Costs

Dog owners

In terms of dog owners, council statistics indicate that, in the time period from April 2024 to March 2025, councils across NI impounded 2,330 stray dogs, and 1,572 (67%) of these were not microchipped. Using this figure of 67% as a baseline, and exploring the figures established through desktop research:

- according to a study from Dogs Trust, the University of Exeter and the University of Leeds, the UK dog population is close to 13 million and 2.1% of these dogs (approximately 273,000) reside in NI¹. This document surmises that there could be potentially 182,910 unmicrochipped dogs in NI.
- according to Pets Magnet², there are 270,000 dogs in NI, and so this document surmises that there might be potentially 180,000 unmicrochipped dogs in NI.

Therefore, from 1,572 to around 180,000 dog keepers, are currently at risk of a penalty for not having their dog microchipped as, barring any exemptions, they are currently required to microchip their dog at one of several points. This new requirement would mean that all keepers would be required to microchip their puppy by eight weeks of age.

The Department does not hold any information about how much microchipping of dog costs, but the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) website indicates that it usually costs between £10-£30³. This is a one-off fee which dog keepers will be required to pay at an earlier time-point, but it will not be an additional cost.

¹ [UK dog population may be millions more than estimated | Dogs Trust](#)

² <https://petsmagnet.co.uk/blogs/news/pet-dog-population-in-the-united-kingdom-of-great-britain-and-northern-ireland>

³ [Microchipping Your Dog - PDSA](#)

Microchip database providers

The Department understands that there are 22 database providers providing a service in NI. The Department does not hold any information on their costs to ensure the service is reflective of the new rules. In addition, the Department does not hold any information on fees which these database providers might charge a customer, for example for updating the records due to things like a change of address. Given that they currently record dog keeper, and dog, information, on databases and make that information available to councils, it is considered that the cost will potentially include an add-on to their current database system that enables retention of keeper information, and training of operators.

Councils

Under dog control legislation, and animal welfare legislation, councils are responsible for enforcement relating to companion/pet animals. Councils will therefore be the regulatory authority under the proposal. The Department does not hold any information on the council resources which will be used to exercise its role to administer and enforce the new rules. It is considered that the cost will potentially include training of officers to provide information on new requirements for keepers, and on the additional information available to them from the database providers as they continue to enforce legislation.

The consultation will welcome evidence on costs.

The Department

The Department intends for the new regulations to be accompanied by an awareness campaign. It is expected that the associated costs will be incorporated within the existing animal welfare and responsible dog ownership campaign, with messaging covering issues such as proper identification and microchipping.

Benefits from preferred option

The preferred option will improve the traceability, and welfare, of dogs by strengthening the current microchipping requirements. Missing pets will be reunited with their owners at a quicker pace.

Dog owners

From 1,572 to around 180,000 dog keepers, are currently at risk of a penalty for not having their dog microchipped. An unknown quantity of dog keepers who have microchipped their dog, may have not yet updated those details with, for example, any change of address information. This new requirement will compel action at particular time points (rather than, for example, at a point when it is reasonably practicable for the dog keeper). This, when coupled with awareness information, would encourage owners to microchip their dogs by eight weeks of age, potentially saving them travel and other expenses incurred in trying to find their dog, where it strays/goes missing.

Microchip database providers

Database providers will be able to satisfy their customer's needs by recording dog keeper, and dog breeder (where the keeper is also the breeder), information, on databases. This has the potential to raise their profile in a positive way.

Councils

Council officers will potentially be able to retrieve accurate and up to date information pertaining to dogs that they are trying to reunite with their owners, meaning that their reunification rates/times might increase. This new requirement will compel action at particular time points (rather than, for example, at a point when it is reasonably practicable for the dog keeper) and therefore is a stronger enforcement tool for councils. This, when coupled with awareness information, would encourage owners to microchip their dogs by eight weeks of age, potentially saving them travel and other expenses incurred in trying to find their dog, where it strays/goes missing. This has the potential to raise their profile in a positive way.

Wider impacts, from preferred option:

Animal rescue and rehoming organisations will potentially see less lost/stray animals coming to them for rehoming.

Increased transparency will be afforded to NI's dog population, and this will have the potential to strengthen other areas, including breeding and selling.

Risks and assumptions

Currently there are a lot of dogs already in breach of regulations related to microchipping, so a new regulation may have the same issues. However, this risk will be reduced when the regulations are accompanied by an awareness campaign. It is noted that an assumption has been made around the size of the dog population in NI, and how many dogs are not microchipped. This is due to the fact that the evidence used was the council statistics on dog control, which included numbers of dogs seized and whether they were microchipped.

The consultation will welcome information on costs and benefits.

Overall impact

The proposed policy brings with it benefits that outweigh the costs, although the Department encourages respondents to provide evidence on any unforeseen costs. The overall impact is considered to be positive, fostering better welfare standards for Northern Ireland's dogs, and increased transparency, and owner accountability.

Preferred Option

OPTION 2: Strengthen current dog microchipping requirements.

This option would mean that new regulations would be made which would set out updated requirements regarding microchipping of dogs and also strengthen requirements regarding databases of microchip information.

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 make regulations to strengthen current dog microchipping requirements.
(Current requirements regarding dog microchipping are set out in the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 and the Dogs (Licensing and Identification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012)).

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

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

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

Introduction of regulations made under the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 to bolster current dog microchipping requirements.

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

In the Animal Welfare Pathway 2025-27 ([DAERA Animal Welfare Pathway](#)), the Minister committed to exploring bolstering current database requirements and making it an offence for dog owners to not update details on databases. The objective of the policy, which derives from this commitment, is to improve the traceability, and welfare, of dogs by bolstering the current dog microchipping legislative requirements.

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.

Currently there are various timeframes for microchipping dogs: before they reach eight weeks of age; before being sold or given away, and for puppies kept with their mother, by six months of age. The microchip implanter must be a vet or someone who has received instruction, and he/she must then record the details on a microchip database within seven days. Keepers must then advise the database provider of any change (e.g. address) as soon as reasonably practicable.

The new policy will specify that all dogs must be microchipped before they reach eight weeks of age, and will place specific, time-bound, requirements on owners to keep their records up to date, e.g. within 14 days. Keepers will also be obliged to declare where they are also the breeder of the dog so that this information can be recorded on the database.

The impact of the new policy will be the same for people in rural areas as it is for people in urban areas. Veterinary surgeons, who are also implanters, and councils, who enforce the legislation, will be able to identify dogs presented to them, as well as obtain up-to-date owner details. The effect of this will be to facilitate greater pet dog traceability and reunification.

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.

N/A. The policy will impact on people in rural areas in the same way as it will impact on people in urban areas.

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

Rural Businesses	<input 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 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 checked="" 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.

Officials explored the Northern Ireland's Census 2021 ([Northern Ireland Census Data](#)) and its associated search portal ([Northern Ireland Census Data](#)) which displays the population and households information about each of Northern Ireland's towns and areas. There is no data on dog ownership in these areas. Councils provide information to DAERA on a quarterly basis ([Council Dog Summary Statistics](#)) and this is then published on the DAERA website. The statistics provide information on dog licensing, including strays that were microchipped. The statistics do not provide any break-down information on the towns/areas/rural areas within districts. Officials explored council statistics, which are published on the DAERA website. These indicate that in April 2024 to March 2025, councils impounded 2,330 stray dogs, 1,572 (67%) of which were not microchipped. According to the council statistics, the 11 councils seized stray dogs in this period, as follows:

Antrim and Newtownabbey BC: 103 dogs out of 164 seized were microchipped. Ards and North Down BC: 58 dogs out of 103 seized were microchipped. Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon BC: 142 dogs out of 476 seized were microchipped. Belfast CC: 276 dogs out of 422 seized were microchipped. Causeway Coast and Glens BC: 88 dogs out of 186 seized were microchipped. Derry and Strabane DC: 26 dogs out of 277 seized were microchipped. Fermanagh and Omagh DC: 177 dogs out of 251 seized were microchipped. Lisburn and Castlereagh CC: 51 dogs out of 123 seized were microchipped. Mid and East Antrim BC: 102 dogs out of 188 seized were microchipped. Mid Ulster DC: 9 dogs out of 280 seized were microchipped. Newry, Mourne and Down DC: 79 dogs out of 285 seized were microchipped.

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

The social and economic needs of people in rural areas in relation to this policy do not differ from the social and economic needs of people from urban areas.

All dog owners will be required to ensure their pet is microchipped by the specified age and will be required to declare where they are also the breeder of the dog. The implanter will continue to be required to ensure the details pertaining to the microchip are recorded on a microchip database, and all owners will be required to keep their details up to date on that database within a specified timeframe, e.g. 14 days, rather than when 'reasonably practicable'.

The Department will consider any evidence of a particular need of people in rural areas that may be brought to its attention during the public consultation process.

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.

The social and economic needs of people in rural areas in relation to this policy do not differ from the social and economic needs of the people from urban areas.

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

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

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

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

N/A

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

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

No rural needs have been identified. The Department will take account of any needs that might be identified during public consultation.

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:	Brenda Kelly
Position/Grade:	DP
Division/Branch	Animal Welfare and Dog Control Policy Branch
Signature:	B KELLY
Date:	26 March 2026
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Position/Grade:	Grade 6
Division/Branch:	Animal Health and Welfare Policy Division
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Date:	8 April 2026

Equality & Disability Duties Screening Template

December 2023 version



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

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

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

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

Introduction

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

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

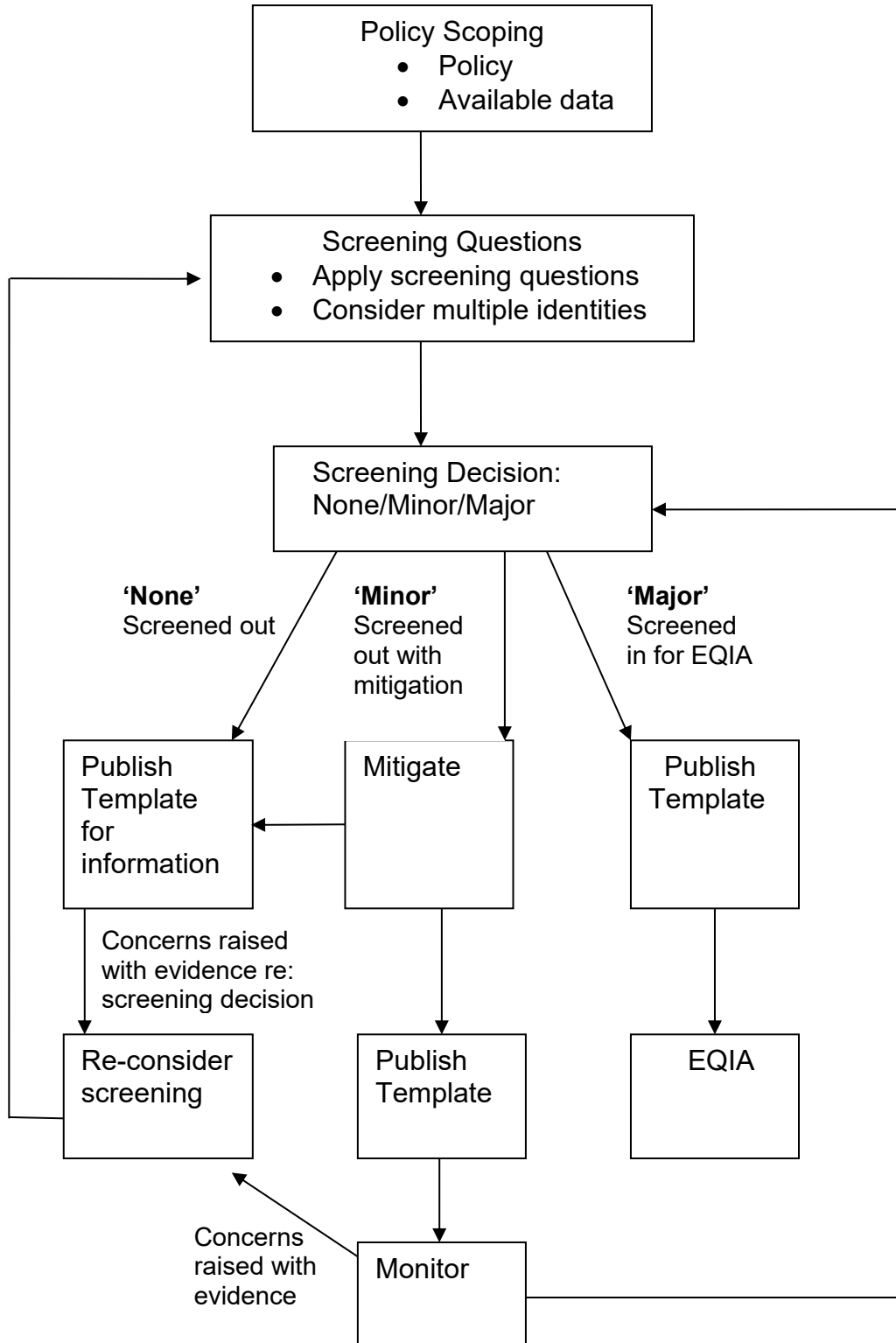
Part 3. Screening decision – guides the public authority to reach a screening decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA), or to introduce measures to mitigate the likely impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality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

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

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

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

A screening flowchart is provided below.



Part 1. Policy scoping

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

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

Information about the policy

Name of the policy

Regulations to strengthen dog microchipping requirements.

Is this an existing, revised or new policy?

Revised policy.
Current requirements regarding dog microchipping are set out in the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 and the Dogs (Licensing and Identification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012).

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

As indicated in the Animal Welfare Pathway 2025-27¹, Animal Welfare is a top priority for the Minister, and the Pathway sets out the Minister’s commitment to explore the merits of:

- bolstering the current database requirements to ensure that Northern Ireland dog owners’ information is recorded, accessed and utilised in line with industry standards and facilitates pet traceability; and
- making it an offence for dog owners to not update ownership details on microchip databases.

The Pathway also indicates that proposed reforms will be explored in detail with all stakeholders and subject to full public consultation.

The overarching objective of the proposed policy is to improve the traceability and welfare of dogs by making new rules to bolster the current microchipping requirements.

Microchipping of dogs is linked with licensing of dogs. Persons who wish to keep a dog in Northern Ireland must first obtain a dog licence from their local council to do so. A council cannot issue a dog licence unless the dog is microchipped.

There are various legislative provisions which specify when a dog must be microchipped. Currently, dogs kept under a block licence, and puppies kept in a commercial dog breeding establishment, must be microchipped before they reach 8 weeks of age (a block licence is a single licence that lets someone keep several dogs, instead of needing a separate dog licence for each

¹ [DAERA Animal Welfare Pathway](#)

individual dog). Dogs not kept under a block licence, and which are kept with the mother, must be microchipped by the time they reach six months old. Dogs being sold or given away must be licensed and therefore must be microchipped.

Current regulations set out the technical standard for the type of microchip which must be used for microchipping and also specify the details to be recorded on a database which is accessible to officers. In addition, they place some requirements on implanters and keepers regarding keeping records up to date. E.g. the implantation must be carried out by a veterinary surgeon or a person who received instruction on how to implant a microchip (and the microchip details would then be recorded on a microchip database); and if specified details change (e.g. address) then the keeper would continue to be obliged to notify the database provider as soon as reasonably practicable.

The proposed policy will specify that all dogs be microchipped before they reach eight weeks of age. The proposed policy will also require keepers to confirm whether they bred the dog themselves, so that this breeder status can be included as part of the dog's microchip record. It will also place specific requirements on owners to keep their records up to date in a specified timeframe (e.g. 14 days rather than as soon as reasonably practicable). The effect of this will be to enable the system of microchipping to better facilitate pet traceability.

This proposed policy will help protect and improve the welfare of dogs. The requirement for up-to-date records will also have a positive effect of stray dogs being reunited with their owners more efficiently and may also have positive impacts on animal rescue charities/establishments.

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. (The Department)

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The Department owns the policy and legislation, and 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:

The enabling powers regarding dog microchipping are set out in the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983, and current provisions are prescribed in the Dogs (Licensing and Identification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012).

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

In terms of service users, dog keepers who are required to meet current requirements, will be required to meet revised requirements, regarding microchipping their dog, and keeping details up to date on the database that holds their details. These dog keepers will be required to declare that they bred the dog themselves (if that is the case). Database providers who are required to meet current requirements, will be required to meet revised requirements in terms of recording breeder details (where the breeder is also the keeper).

In terms of other public sector organisations, local councils are responsible for enforcing the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983. Enforcement would therefore fall to councils.

Voluntary/community/trade unions

Other, please specify

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they?

Current requirements regarding dog microchipping are set out in the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 and the Dogs (Licensing and Identification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012). The enabling powers for the legislation

relating to the proposed policy are set out in the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983.

Who owns them?

The Department

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:

Northern Ireland’s Census 2021² illustrates the religious composition of Northern Ireland as:

- Catholic: 42.31%
- Presbyterian Church in Ireland: 16.61%
- Church of Ireland: 11.55%
- Methodist Church in Ireland: 2.35%
- Other Christian (including Christian related): 6.85%
- Other religions: 1.34%

² [Census 2021 main statistics identity tables | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

- No religion: 17.39%
- Religion not stated: 1.60%

The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 makes provision for the licensing of dogs. Article 52 of the Order requires Councils to provide information relating to the operating of the Order as required by the Department. Councils provide information on a quarterly basis³, and this information is then published on the DAERA website. The statistics provide information on a wide range of topics, including dog licences, and strays that were microchipped before they were seized by the council. Council statistics indicate that in April 2024 to March 2025, councils across NI impounded 2,330 stray dogs, and 1,572 (67%) of these were not microchipped. The statistics do not provide information on the religious composition of dog keepers.

The Dogs Trust's National Dog Survey 2025⁴ indicates that 6,512 people from Northern Ireland (NI) responded to its survey about dogs. Responses were received from participants across all four nations of the UK, 2% of whom were from NI, broadly reflecting the UK population distribution. The survey indicates: most were aged between 45 and 74 years (64%); the majority identified as female (80%); the vast majority identified as White British (94%); most households consisted of two adults, and 19% included children; most respondents were homeowners (76%), while 20% reported renting their home. The survey did not include information about religious belief. The survey indicated that in terms of interpreting the data, the National Dog Survey uses a voluntary, convenience sample which is not necessarily nationally representative. Some groups are over-represented, and comprehensive data on dog ownership rates are lacking.

³ [Council dog summary statistics | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

⁴ [NDS 2025 State of the nation report desktop version.pdf](#)

The forthcoming public consultation will provide an opportunity for individuals and groups to express their views. Any issues relating to religious beliefs raised during the consultation period will be carefully considered when determining the final policy proposal.

Political Opinion evidence/information:

The NI Life & Times survey 2024⁵ illustrates the political opinion composition of Northern Ireland as:

- Unionist: 30%
- Nationalist: 30%
- Neither: 35%
- Other answer: 2%
- Don't know: 3%

The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 makes provision for the licensing of dogs. Article 52 of the Order requires Councils to provide information relating to the operating of the Order as required by DAERA. Councils provide information on a quarterly basis⁶, and this information is then published on the DAERA website. The statistics provide information on a wide range of topics, including dog licences, and strays that were microchipped before they were seized by the council. The statistics do not provide information on the political opinion of dog keepers.

⁵ [Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey: 2024](#)

⁶ [Council dog summary statistics | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

The Dogs Trust’s National Dog Survey 2025⁷ indicates that 6,512 people from NI responded to its survey about dogs. The survey indicates: responses were received from participants across all four nations of the UK, 2% of whom were from NI, broadly reflecting the UK population distribution; most were aged between 45 and 74 years (64%); the majority identified as female (80%); the vast majority identified as White British (94%); most households consisted of two adults, and 19% included children; most respondents were homeowners (76%), while 20% reported renting their home. The survey did not include information about political opinion. The survey indicated that in terms of interpreting the data, the National Dog Survey uses a voluntary, convenience sample which is not necessarily nationally representative. Some groups are over-represented, and comprehensive data on dog ownership rates are lacking.

The forthcoming public consultation will provide an opportunity for individuals and groups to express their views. Any issues relating to political opinions raised during the consultation period will be carefully considered when determining the final policy proposal.

Racial Group evidence/information:

Northern Ireland’s Census 2021⁸ illustrates the racial group composition of Northern Ireland as:

- White: 96.55%
- Irish Traveller: 0.14%
- Roma: 0.08%
- Indian: 0.52%

⁷ [NDS 2025 State of the nation report desktop version.pdf](#)

⁸ [Census 2021 main statistics identity tables | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

- Chinese: 0.50%
- Filipino: 0.23%
- Pakistani: 0.08%
- Arab: 0.10%
- Other Asian: 0.28%
- Black African: 0.42%
- Black Other: 0.16%
- Mixed: 0.76%
- Other ethnicities: 0.19%

The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 makes provision for the licensing of dogs. Article 52 of the Order requires Councils to provide information relating to the operating of the Order as required by DAERA. Councils provide information on a quarterly basis⁹, and this information is then published on the DAERA website. The statistics provide information on a wide range of topics, including dog licences, and strays that were microchipped before they were seized by the council. The statistics do not provide information on racial groups.

The Dogs Trust's National Dog Survey 2025¹⁰ indicates that 6,512 people from Northern Ireland responded to its survey about dogs. The survey indicates: responses were received from participants across all four nations of the UK, 2% of whom were from Northern Ireland, broadly reflecting the UK population distribution; and the vast majority identified as White British (94%). The survey indicated that in terms of interpreting the data, the National Dog Survey uses a voluntary, convenience sample which is not necessarily

⁹ [Council dog summary statistics | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹⁰ [NDS 2025 State of the nation report desktop version.pdf](#)

nationally representative. Some groups are over-represented, and other groups, such as people from minority ethnic backgrounds, may be under-represented. It added that comprehensive data on dog ownership rates are lacking.

The forthcoming public consultation will provide an opportunity for individuals and groups to express their views. Any issues relating to racial group raised during the consultation period will be carefully considered when determining the final policy proposal.

Age evidence/information:

Northern Ireland's Census 2021¹¹ illustrates the age composition of Northern Ireland as:

- 0-4 years: 5.98%
- 5-9 years: 6.54%
- 10-14 years: 6.67%
- 15-19 years: 5.95%
- 20-24 years: 5.85%
- 25-29 years: 6.12%
- 30-34 years: 6.62%
- 35-39 years: 6.69%
- 40-44 years: 6.42%
- 45-49 years: 6.39%
- 50-54 years: 6.88%
- 55-59 years: 6.79%
- 60-64 years: 5.94%

¹¹ [Main statistics | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

- 65-69 years: 4.91%
- 70-74 years: 4.39%
- 75-79 years: 3.49%
- 80-84 years: 2.30%
- 85-89 years: 1.36%
- 90+ years: 0.71%

The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 makes provision for the licensing of dogs. Article 52 of the Order requires Councils to provide information relating to the operating of the Order as required by DAERA. Councils provide information on a quarterly basis¹², and this information is published on the DAERA website. The statistics provide information on a wide range of topics, including dog licences, and strays that were microchipped before they were seized by the council. The statistics do not provide information on the age of dog owners. Legislation however provides that a person must be 16 or over to get a dog licence, so the council dog licensing information pertains to those aged 16 and over.

The Dogs Trust's National Dog Survey 2025¹³ indicates that 6,512 people from Northern Ireland responded to its survey about dogs. The survey indicates: responses were received from participants across all four nations of the UK, 2% of whom were from Northern Ireland, broadly reflecting the UK population distribution; and most were aged between 45 and 74 years (64%). The survey indicated that in terms of interpreting the data, the National Dog Survey uses a voluntary, convenience sample which is not necessarily nationally representative. Some groups are over-represented, and comprehensive data on dog ownership rates are lacking.

¹² [Council dog summary statistics | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹³ [NDS 2025 State of the nation report desktop version.pdf](#)

The forthcoming public consultation will provide an opportunity for individuals and groups to express their views. Any issues relating to age raised during the consultation period will be carefully considered when determining the final policy proposal.

Marital Status evidence/information:

Northern Ireland's Census 2021¹⁴ illustrates the marital status composition of Northern Ireland as:

- Single (never married or never registered civil partnership): 38.07%
- Married: 45.59%
- In a civil partnership: 0.18%
- Separated (but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership): 3.78%
- Divorced or formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved: 6.02%
- Widowed or surviving partner from a civil partnership: 6.36%

The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 makes provision for the licensing of dogs. Article 52 of the Order requires Councils to provide information relating to the operating of the Order as required by DAERA. Councils provide information on a quarterly basis¹⁵, and this information is then published on the DAERA website. The statistics provide information on a wide range of topics, including dog licences, and strays that were microchipped before they were seized by the council. The statistics do not provide information on the marital status of dog keepers.

¹⁴ [Main statistics | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

¹⁵ [Council dog summary statistics | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

The Dogs Trust’s National Dog Survey 2025¹⁶ indicates that 6,512 people from Northern Ireland responded to its survey about dogs. The survey indicates: responses were received from participants across all four nations of the UK, 2% of whom were from Northern Ireland, broadly reflecting the UK population distribution; most were aged between 45 and 74 years (64%); the majority identified as female (80%); the vast majority identified as White British (94%); most households consisted of two adults, and 19% included children; most respondents were homeowners (76%), while 20% reported renting their home. The survey did not include information about marital status. The survey indicated that in terms of interpreting the data, the National Dog Survey uses a voluntary, convenience sample which is not necessarily nationally representative. Some groups are over-represented, and comprehensive data on dog ownership rates are lacking.

The forthcoming public consultation will provide an opportunity for individuals and groups to express their views. Any issues relating to marital status raised during the consultation period will be carefully considered when determining the final policy proposal.

Sexual Orientation evidence/information:

Northern Ireland’s Census 2021¹⁷ illustrates the sexual orientation of Northern Ireland as:

- Straight or heterosexual: 90.04%
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, other sexual orientation: 2.09%
- Prefer not to say or not stated: 7.87%

¹⁶ [NDS 2025 State of the nation report desktop version.pdf](#)

¹⁷ [Main statistics | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 makes provision for the licensing of dogs. Article 52 of the Order requires Councils to provide information relating to the operating of the Order as required by DAERA. Councils provide information on a quarterly basis¹⁸, and this information is then published on the DAERA website. The statistics provide information on a wide range of topics, including dog licences, and strays that were microchipped before they were seized by the council. The statistics do not provide information on the sexual orientation of dog keepers.

The Dogs Trust's National Dog Survey 2025¹⁹ indicates that 6,512 people from Northern Ireland responded to its survey about dogs. The survey indicates: responses were received from participants across all four nations of the UK, 2% of whom were from Northern Ireland, broadly reflecting the UK population distribution; most were aged between 45 and 74 years (64%); the majority identified as female (80%); the vast majority identified as White British (94%); most households consisted of two adults, and 19% included children; most respondents were homeowners (76%), while 20% reported renting their home. The survey did not include information about sexual orientation. The survey indicated that in terms of interpreting the data, the National Dog Survey uses a voluntary, convenience sample which is not necessarily nationally representative. Some groups are over-represented, and comprehensive data on dog ownership rates are lacking.

The forthcoming public consultation will provide an opportunity for individuals and groups to express their views. Any issues relating to sexual orientation

¹⁸ [Council dog summary statistics | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹⁹ [NDS 2025 State of the nation report desktop version.pdf](#)

raised during the consultation period will be carefully considered when determining the final policy proposal.

Men & Women generally evidence/information:

Northern Ireland's Census 2021²⁰ illustrates the sex composition of Northern Ireland as:

Female: 50.81%

Male: 49.19%

The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 makes provision for the licensing of dogs. Article 52 of the Order requires Councils to provide information relating to the operating of the Order as required by DAERA. Councils provide information on a quarterly basis²¹, and this information is then published on the DAERA website. The statistics provide information on a wide range of topics, including dog licences, and strays that were microchipped before they were seized by the council. The statistics do not provide information on the sex of dog keepers.

The Dogs Trust's National Dog Survey 2025²² indicates that 6,512 people from Northern Ireland responded to its survey about dogs. The survey indicates: responses were received from participants across all four nations of the UK, 2% of whom were from Northern Ireland, broadly reflecting the UK population distribution, and the majority identified as female (80%). The survey indicated that in terms of interpreting the data, the National Dog Survey uses a voluntary, convenience sample which is not necessarily

²⁰ [Main statistics | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

²¹ [Council dog summary statistics | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

²² [NDS 2025 State of the nation report desktop version.pdf](#)

nationally representative. Some groups are over-represented, and comprehensive data on dog ownership rates are lacking.

The forthcoming public consultation will provide an opportunity for individuals and groups to express their views. Any issues relating to gender raised during the consultation period will be carefully considered when determining the final policy proposal.

Disability evidence/information:

Northern Ireland's Census 2021²³ illustrates the number of residents in households with a limiting or long-term problem or disability, in Northern Ireland, as:

- No residents have a limiting long-term health problem or disability: 55.14%
- One resident has a limiting long-term health problem or disability: 33.63%
- Two or more residents have a limiting long-term health problem or disability: 11.23%

The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 makes provision for the licensing of dogs. Article 52 of the Order requires Councils to provide information relating to the operating of the Order as required by DAERA. Councils provide information on a quarterly basis²⁴, and this information is then published on the DAERA website. The statistics provide information on a wide range of topics, including dog licences, and strays that were microchipped before they

²³ [Main statistics | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

²⁴ [Council dog summary statistics | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

were seized by the council. The statistics do not provide information on whether dog keepers have a limiting long-term problem or disability.

The Dogs Trust's National Dog Survey 2025²⁵ indicates that 6,512 people from Northern Ireland responded to its survey about dogs. The survey indicates: responses were received from participants across all four nations of the UK, 2% of whom were from Northern Ireland, broadly reflecting the UK population distribution; most were aged between 45 and 74 years (64%); the majority identified as female (80%); the vast majority identified as White British (94%); most households consisted of two adults, and 19% included children; most respondents were homeowners (76%), while 20% reported renting their home. The survey did not include information about disability. The survey indicated that in terms of interpreting the data, the National Dog Survey uses a voluntary, convenience sample which is not necessarily nationally representative. Some groups are over-represented, and comprehensive data on dog ownership rates are lacking.

The forthcoming public consultation will provide an opportunity for individuals and groups to express their views. Any issues relating to disability raised during the consultation period will be carefully considered when determining the final policy proposal.

Dependants evidence/information:

Northern Ireland's Census 2021²⁶ illustrates the number of dependent children in households in Northern Ireland, as:

- No children in household: 53.15%

²⁵ [NDS 2025 State of the nation report desktop version.pdf](#)

²⁶ [Main statistics | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

- No dependent children in household/All children in household non-dependent: 16.17%
- One dependent child aged 0-4: 3.86%
- One dependent child aged 5-11: 2.96%
- One dependent child aged 12-18: 5.32%
- Two dependent children, youngest aged 0-4: 4.48%
- Two dependent children, youngest aged 5-11: 4.94%
- Two dependent children, youngest aged 12-18: 2.48%
- Three or more dependent children, youngest aged 0-4: 3.27%
- Three or more dependent children, youngest aged 5-11: 2.91%
- Three or more dependent children, youngest aged 12-18: 0.47%

The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 makes provision for the licensing of dogs. Article 52 of the Order requires Councils to provide information relating to the operating of the Order as required by DAERA. Councils provide information on a quarterly basis²⁷, and this information is then published on the DAERA website. The statistics provide information on a wide range of topics, including dog licences, and strays that were microchipped before they were seized by the council. The statistics do not provide information on the dependents of dog keepers.

The Dogs Trust's National Dog Survey 2025²⁸ indicates that 6,512 people from Northern Ireland responded to its survey about dogs. The survey indicates: responses were received from participants across all four nations of the UK, 2% of whom were from Northern Ireland, broadly reflecting the UK population distribution; most households consisted of two adults, and 19%

²⁷ [Council dog summary statistics | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

²⁸ [NDS 2025 State of the nation report desktop version.pdf](#)

included children. The survey indicated that in terms of interpreting the data, the National Dog Survey uses a voluntary, convenience sample which is not necessarily nationally representative. Some groups are over-represented, and comprehensive data on dog ownership rates are lacking.

The forthcoming public consultation will provide an opportunity for individuals and groups to express their views. Any issues relating to dependents raised during the consultation period will be carefully considered 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

The legislation will require all dogs to be microchipped by eight weeks of age. Keepers will be required to confirm whether they bred the dog so this can be added to the dog's microchip record, and they must update their details within a specified timeframe (e.g. 14 days). The policy will be applied to all dog owners in Northern Ireland. People in this category will have no particular needs, experiences or priorities. The public consultation will however provide an opportunity for the people in this category to raise any issues, and the Department will consider accordingly.

Political Opinion

As above

Racial Group

As above

Age

As above

Marital status

As above

Sexual orientation

As above

Men and Women Generally

As above

Disability

As above

Dependants

As above

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 dog keepers in NI, and database providers, regardless of religious belief, will be required to meet requirements regarding dog microchipping. Local councils will remain responsible for enforcing microchipping requirements, 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 dog keepers in NI, and database providers, regardless of political opinion, will be required to meet requirements regarding dog microchipping. Local councils will remain responsible for enforcing microchipping requirements, regardless of political opinion.

What is the level of impact? Minor Major None

(select as appropriate)

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

None – all dog keepers in NI, and database providers, regardless of race, will be required to meet requirements regarding dog microchipping. Local councils will remain responsible for enforcing microchipping requirements, regardless of race.

What is the level of impact? Minor Major None

(select as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on *Age*:

None – all dog keepers in NI, and database providers, regardless of age, will be required to meet requirements regarding dog microchipping. Local councils will remain responsible for enforcing microchipping requirements, regardless of age.

What is the level of impact? Minor Major None

(select as appropriate)

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

None – all dog keepers in NI, and database providers, regardless of marital status, will be required to meet requirements regarding dog microchipping. Local councils will remain responsible for enforcing microchipping requirements, regardless of marital status.

What is the level of impact? Minor Major None

(select as appropriate)

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

None – all dog keepers in NI, and database providers, regardless of sexual orientation, will be required to meet requirements regarding dog microchipping. Local councils will remain responsible for enforcing microchipping requirements, regardless of sexual orientation.

What is the level of impact Minor Major None

(select as appropriate)

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

None – all dog keepers in NI, and database providers, regardless of being men/women, will be required to meet requirements regarding dog microchipping. Local councils will remain responsible for enforcing microchipping requirements, regardless of being men/women.

What is the level of impact? Minor Major None

(select as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on *Disability*:

None – all dog keepers in NI, and database providers, regardless of disability, will be required to meet requirements regarding dog microchipping. Consideration was given to the potential impact on keepers of assistance dogs, however, as these dogs complete the necessary processes prior to placement, the proposed policy is assessed as having no adverse impacts on this group. Local councils will remain responsible for enforcing microchipping requirements, regardless of disability.

What is the level of impact? Minor Major None

(select as appropriate)

Details of the likely policy impacts on *Dependants*:

None – all dog keepers in NI, and database providers, regardless of dependants, will be required to meet requirements regarding dog microchipping. Local councils will remain responsible for enforcing microchipping requirements, regardless of dependants.

What is the level of impact? Major None

(select as appropriate)

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

Yes No (select as appropriate)

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

Religious Belief - If Yes, provide details:

N/A

If No, provide reasons:

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

Political Opinion - If Yes, provide details:

N/A

If No, provide reasons:

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

Racial Group - If Yes, provide details:

N/A

If No, provide reasons:

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

Age - If Yes, provide details:

N/A

If No, provide reasons:

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

Marital Status - If Yes, provide details:

N/A

If No, provide reasons

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

Sexual Orientation - If Yes, provide details:

N/A

If No, provide reasons:

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

Men and Women generally - If Yes, provide details:

N/A

If No, provide reasons:

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

Disability - If Yes, provide details:

N/A

If No, provide reasons:

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

Dependants - If Yes, provide details:

N/A

If No, provide reasons:

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

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

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

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

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

What is the level of impact? Minor Major None

(select as appropriate)

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

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

What is the level of impact? Minor Major None

(select as appropriate)

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

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

What is the level of impact? Minor Major None

(select as appropriate)

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

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

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

N/A

If No, provide reasons:

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 monitored to inform the position.

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.

Current dog microchipping policy applies, equally, to all persons who keep dogs, and the proposed revised microchipping requirements will also apply to all persons equally.

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 Life & Times survey 2024; the Dogs Trust's National Dog Survey 2025, and NI council dog statistics (published on the DAERA website). An Equality and Human Rights Screening Exercise has been undertaken, which assessed this evidence relating to s75 considerations, including equality of opportunity and good relations, and Disability Duties and Human Rights.

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

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

N/A

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

Mitigation

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

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations? Yes No (select as appropriate)

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

N/A

Timetabling and prioritising

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been ‘screened in’ for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

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

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	N/A
Social need	N/A
Effect on people’s daily lives	N/A
Relevance to a public authority’s functions	N/A
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 consider all comments generated from 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 consider all comments generated from the public consultation, including any evidence relating to impacts on good relations 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.

Disability Duties:

The Department will consider all comments generated from the public consultation, including any evidence relating to impacts on disability duties 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.

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	Article 2	Yes/No
Prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment	Article 3	Yes/No
Prohibition of slavery and forced labour	Article 4	Yes/No
Right to liberty and security	Article 5	Yes/No
Right to a fair and public trial	Article 6	Yes/No
Right to no punishment without law	Article 7	Yes/No
Right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence	Article 8	Yes/No
Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Article 9	Yes/No
Right to freedom of expression	Article 10	Yes/No

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

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

No adverse impact on human rights have been identified.

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

No ways to positively promote human rights have been identified.

Part 6 - Approval and authorisation

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

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

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

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

Name: Brenda Kelly

Grade: DP

Branch: Animal Welfare and Dog

Date: 26 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. 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

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:

Equality Unit,
Equality & Diversity Branch
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
Jubilee House
111 Ballykelly Road
Ballykelly
Limavady
BT49 9HP

Tel: 028 7744 2027

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