

Screening

Policy scoping

Information about the policy

Policy name	Safeguarding Children (Under 18s) Policy.
Existing/Revised/New policy	New.
What is the policy trying to achieve	This policy aims to establish guidelines for staff to ensure the safety and well-being of young people under the age of 18 years whilst being present in the Commission's premises and ensuring that they are not exposed to any Commission activity that may negatively impact on their wellbeing.
Policy author	Establishment Programme Team
Policy owner	Head of Safeguarding

Are there any S75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy? If so, explain how.

Yes. The S75 category age might (with appropriate mitigations in place) be expected to benefit from the intended policy, as it aims to ensure equal protection and care for young people under 18 by establishing guidelines to prevent detriment to their wellbeing. The policy will also benefit those with dependants under the age of 18 as it sets out safeguarding guidelines for Commission staff who happen to interact with these dependants.

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

There are legislative and strategic factors which could contribute to the intended aims and outcomes of this policy.

Legislative:

[The Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#) is the principal statute governing the care, upbringing, and protection of children in Northern Ireland. It affects all those who work and care for children, whether parents, paid carers, or volunteers.

Human Rights Act 1998.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – promotes a child centred approach.

[Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland \(2017\)](#) is the policy which sets out guidelines for safeguarding children and young people in the statutory, private, independent, community, voluntary and faith sectors.

Strategic:

The NI cross-departmental Children and Young People's Strategy (CYPS) was published in compliance with the Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015 which requires the Executive to adopt a strategy to improve the well-being of children and young people. - [final-executive-children-and-young-people's-strategy-2020-2030 \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Main stakeholders affected

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

Staff	Actual
People who use our service	Actual
Other public sector organisations: health and social care bodies, academic organisations etc.	Potential
Voluntary/community/trade unions: advocacy and children's rights groups	Potential
Other, please specify	n/a

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

Name	Who Owns
Safeguarding Policy	Head of Safeguarding
Data Protection Policy	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Mental Capacity Policy	Commissioner for Investigations

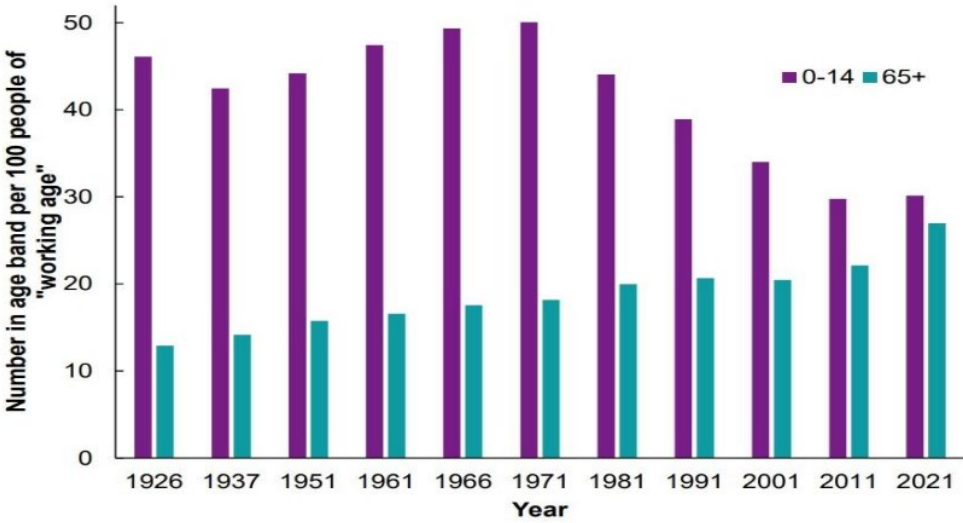
Informed Principles: how the Commission will explore and establish family relationships	Commissioner for Investigations
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Available evidence

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

Religious Belief	On Census Day 2021 just under one person in five (19.0%) either had 'no religion' (17.4%) or 'religion not stated' (1.6%). The equivalent percentages for the main religions were: • Catholic (42.3%) • Presbyterian Church in Ireland (16.6%) • Church of Ireland (11.5%) • Methodist (2.4%) • Other Christian denominations (6.9%) • Other non-Christian Religions (1.3%) Source: Census 2021 main statistics for settlements and wards in Northern Ireland Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk)
Political Opinion	While religious belief is not an automatic determinant of political opinion, it can, for the purposes of this screening, be used as a proxy to determine political opinion. The most recent census data of 2021 did collect information on the basis of identity as follows: In 2021, 31.86% of "All Usual Residents" declared their national identity as British Only; 29.13% selected Irish Only; and 19.78% stated Northern Irish Only. Since 2011, those declaring themselves as British Only and Northern Irish Only has declined by approximately 8 percentage points and 2 percentage points respectively in their share of the national identity categories. Source: Census 2021 main statistics for settlements and wards in Northern Ireland Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk) (Table MS-B15)
Racial Group	Around 98% of Northern Ireland's population identifies as white, with 2% belonging to minority ethnic groups (e.g., Black, Asian, Mixed). The 2021 Census data also revealed growth in the minority ethnic population. Within the time period in which the deaths and serious harm which the ICRIR can investigate occurred, the percentage of the population which identifies as white was even higher.

Age	According to data from the Northern Ireland Census 2021, there are 412,014 people under the age of 18 living in Northern Ireland, accounting for 21.65% of the total population. Of this number, 46641 children are aged 16 or 17 and fall within the remit of this policy. Census 2021- Age- Single Year Breakdown
Marital Status	The most recent Northern Ireland Census shows a declining trend in marriage rates, with more people opting for civil partnerships or remaining single. Northern Ireland Census 2021 data shows a decline in marriage rates, with 42% of adults married, 11% divorced, and an increasing number of people opting for civil partnerships or remaining single.
Sexual Orientation	Sexual orientation data indicates around 2% of the population identifies as LGB (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual) based on NISRA's Continuous Household Survey.
Men and Women Generally	The Northern Ireland Census 2021 produced the following demographic breakdown for Northern Ireland: • Female 50.81% • Male 49.19% Census 2021 main statistics demography tables – age and sex
Disability	In the Census 2021, one person in four (24.3% or 463,000 people) had a limiting long term health problem or disability, 40% of which were aged 65 or more (185,300 people). In total, 1.44 million people (75.7%) indicated they did not have a limiting long-term health problem or disability. The number of people with a limiting long-term health problem or disability increased from the 2011 to 2021 Census. The increase, from 374,600 people in 2011 to 463,000 people in 2021 (an increase of 23.6%), will be driven partly by our ageing population. Census 2021 shows us that 34.7% of people had one or more long-term health conditions (659,800 people). The most prevalent conditions (whether solely or in combination with others) were 'Long-term pain or discomfort' (11.6% of people), 'Mobility or dexterity difficulty that limits basic physical activities' (10.9% of people) and 'Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing' (10.3% of people). For the first time Census 2021 included 'Autism or Asperger syndrome' as a listed health condition and 35,000 people were recorded with this condition. Of this, 19,000 children (or one child in twenty) had 'Autism or Asperger syndrome' recorded.

Dependants	 Source: Census 2021 population and household estimates for Northern Ireland: Statistical bulletin (nisra.gov.uk) The Commission recognises that prohibiting young people under the age from 18 from Commission premises and meetings with Commission staff could impact someone who wishes to make a request, but who is a parent or care giver for someone under 16. Census 2021 shows that there were 365,200 children (aged 0 to 14) or 19% of the population. While the population grows, household sizes continue to fall - the average household size has fallen from 2.54 in 2011 to 2.44 in 2021.
Gender Reassignment (required under Equality Act 2010):	Data on individuals who have undergone or are undergoing gender reassignment is scarce due to privacy concerns. However, estimates suggest that around 1% of the UK population identifies as transgender or non-binary. (Not required for section 75 but it is required under the Equality Act)

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	There is no indication that the policy will disproportionately impact on the basis of religious belief.
Political Opinion	There is no indication that the policy will disproportionately impact on the basis of political opinion.
Racial Group	There is no indication that the policy will disproportionately impact on the basis of racial group.
Age	This policy recognises the impact on children as it specifically excludes under 16s from engaging with the Commission and places reasonable limitations on engagement with children aged 16 – 18. The policy also recognises that a small number of requesting individuals may be between 16-18, and that arrangements must be made to support these individuals.
Marital status	There is no indication that the policy will disproportionately impact on the basis of marital status.
Sexual orientation	There is no indication that the policy will disproportionately impact on the basis of sexual orientation.
Men and Women generally	It can be inferred that there may be more requests to the Commission from bereaved women, with the added consideration that women are more likely to have dependants under the age of 18.
Disability	There is no indication that the policy will disproportionately impact on the basis of disability.
Dependants	This policy will impact on those with dependants either where an adult is looking after a young person or children or, in some cases, where a young person or child is the main carer for their parent or guardian. As such, the priority for this group is to ensure the Commission is flexible in arranging appointments and accommodation for individuals with childcare responsibilities.

Part 2. Screening questions

Introduction

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

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

Level of Impact	Major	Minor	None
			x

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

Level of Impact	Major	Minor	None
			x

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

Level of Impact	Major	Minor	None
			x

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

Assessment: Minor impact.

Rationale: This policy **can** be expected to have an impact on children as it specifically excludes children under 16 from engaging with the Commission and puts some reasonable limitations on engagement by children aged 16 – 18.

Mitigations: The Commission infers that a small number of people between the age of 16 and 18 may wish to make a request but an appropriate adult should be present to support, advise and assist the young person. The Commission will also consider whether there is a more appropriate family member to make the request. The policy

further states that the Commission will make arrangements for an appropriate adult if the young person cannot identify one.

Level of Impact	Major	Minor	None
		x	

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

Level of Impact	Major	Minor	None
			x

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

Level of Impact	Major	Minor	None
			x

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

Level of Impact	Major	Minor	None
			x

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

Level of Impact	Major	Minor	None
			x

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

Assessment: Minor impact.

Rationale: This policy will impact on those with dependants either where it be an adult

looking after a young person or children or, in some cases, where a young person or child is the main carer for their parent or guardian. The Commission recognises that prohibiting young people under the age of 18 from accessing Commission premises and meetings with Commission staff could impact someone who wishes to make a request, but who is a parent or care giver for someone under 18.

Mitigations: The Commission will be flexible in arranging appointments and will ensure that childcaring responsibilities are considered when engaging with Requesting Individuals.

Level of Impact	Major	Minor	None
		x	

2. **Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories? No**

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:

Political Opinion - If Yes, provide details:

Racial Group - If Yes, provide details:

Age - If Yes, provide details:

Marital Status - If Yes, provide details:

Sexual Orientation - If Yes, provide details:

Men and Women generally - If Yes, provide details:

Disability - If Yes, provide details:

Dependants - If Yes, provide details:

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**:

What is the level of impact? None.

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

What is the level of impact? None.

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

What is the level of impact? None.

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:

None identified.

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

It is recognised that this policy could impact on people with multiple identities, for example women (whether married or a single parent) who are primary carers and may have responsibility for looking after a young person with a disability. The Commission will ensure that mitigations are put in place to ensure these multiple identity groups are facilitated to have equal access to the investigative process.

Part 3. Screening decision

Screening outcome: Screened out

Decision: The decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment for the policy on safeguarding children.

Mitigation

The aim of this policy is to set the boundaries for any Commission activity that may bring its staff into contact with children and outline what to do in those situations. The policy is in place to ensure that any activity that the Commission undertakes does not negatively impact on children. Fundamentally, the Commission acknowledges that children's safety and wellbeing is of paramount importance.

While the Commission will not accept requests from children under 18, except under exceptional circumstances, it is committed to making reasonable adjustments to accommodate children aged 16-18 who wish to make a request, ensuring that the investigative process remains accessible and fair to all.

Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Establishment Programme

Date: September 2024

Screened by: Operational Policy Assurance and Compliance

Date: 3 March 2026

Approved by: Head of Safeguarding

Date: 28 July 2026