



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Guidance Notes for Staff

On

SCREENING FOR EQUALITY

What is Screening?

Screening is the process of making an initial decision about whether or not something an organisation does has a different effect on different people. This refers to existing duties and any new or planned ways of doing things. It covers all the ways an organisation does its work - its policies, procedures, duties and areas of work (whether these are written down or not).

If, during screening, it is decided that a policy or duty has a significant effect on equality, the organisation will need to consider carrying out an equality impact assessment (EIA) - a detailed exercise to see whether the policy or duty affects groups (those covered by the legislation) differently or unfairly.

Why do we do Screening?

Under legislation*, public organisations must promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination** and promote good relations between people from different groups^. We are required to check that we are meeting our legal responsibilities by carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). However, it is not always necessary to undertake an EIA and by carrying out an initial screening we are able to determine whether or not the full assessment needs to be done.

The Equality Standard for Local Government requires local authorities to carry out EIAs – the local authority is one of our partners and the practices of the CDP are taken into account in achieving this standard.

The process of equality screening helps us to improve performance and consult with communities to make our actions appropriate and accessible to them.

The process also helps to increase the skills and effectiveness of managers at planning and developing services and actions.

**Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Disability Discrimination Act 2005, Equality Act 2006 (gender duty in 2007). Further additions to cover other equality target groups are likely to be introduced in the future.*

***Practices which treat people less favourably (as defined in legislation) because of race/ethnicity, skin colour, gender/transgender, sexual orientation, religion/faith, age, disability. Sometimes it can be lawful to take positive measures to meet special needs of under-represented groups. If you are unsure, seek further clarification.*

^For example between people of different ethnic backgrounds, different faith groups, men and women, disabled and non-disabled people, people of different ages etc.

Who does the Screening?

All public organisations must screen how they carry out their work in relation to equality.

Within each organisation, the staff member with the greatest knowledge of the policy or activity should carry out the screening. At a later stage, other relevant members of staff, including the staff member's line manager and those with specific responsibility for equality, may be involved in reviewing the screening.

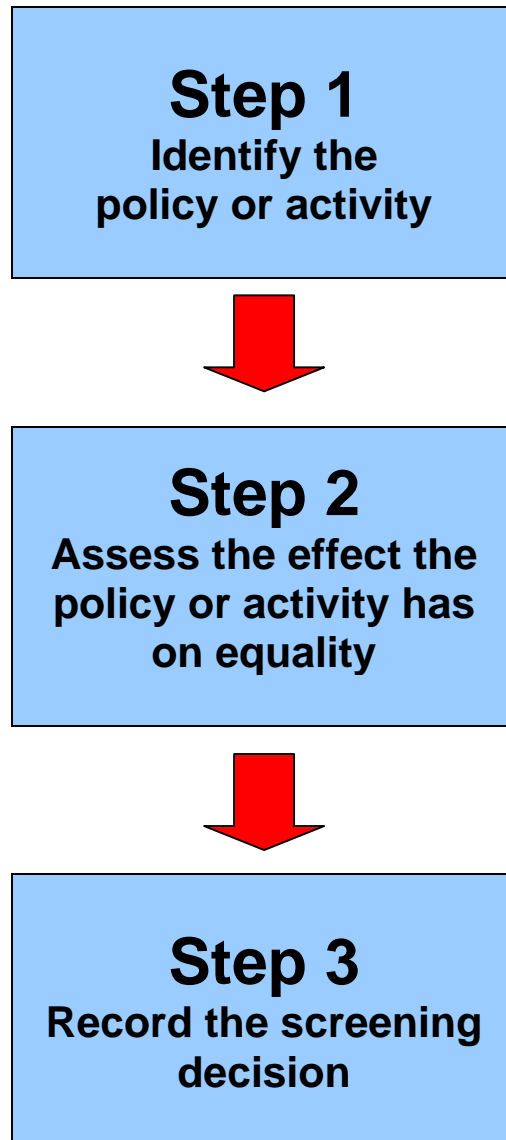
When should the Screening take place?

Screening is an ongoing process. Organisations should screen:

1. All their existing policies, strategies, procedures etc.
2. All new policies and activities that are being developed, ideally at the earliest stage.
3. All activities that are subject to significant change including the closure or decommissioning of services.

How do you carry out Screening?

The steps of the screening process are as follows:



Step 1

It is important to be clear about the policy or activity that is being screened so that an accurate assessment of the effect on equality can be carried out.

Step 2

This step is about deciding whether or not a policy or activity has or will have a significant effect on equality. There are several criteria or conditions that provide a guide for assessment.

Criteria (conditions) for screening

Evidence of

- **Higher or lower involvement or uptake by different groups**
- **Different groups having different needs, experiences, issues and priorities**
- **Evidence that shows that particular activities (or policies etc) create problems that are specific to different groups**

You also need to consider whether the policy or activity provides an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between different groups (see page 3 footnote). The person involved

in screening the activity should make a decision, as far as possible, using any relevant information.

Relevant information may include

- **Information from internal management information systems – such as complaints or service monitoring**
- **Feedback from meetings with group or community representatives**
- **Research or publications that identify particular issues for groups**
- **Informal evidence from groups that may show the effect policies and duties have on equality**

If, after considering the information, the answer to any of the screening criteria is 'Yes', this shows that there is some effect on equality.

However, screening is about identifying those policies and duties that have a significant effect on equality. The equality effects that may be deemed significant are, for example:-

- if the information clearly shows that the policy or duty has a direct and possibly unfair effect on groups
- the policy or duty will directly affect social need across one or more groups
- the policy or duty affects the public considerably

- the human, economic or social rights of those involved are considerably affected

If the organisation decides that the policy or duty has a significant effect on equality, it must consider carrying out a full equality impact assessment.

Step 3

The screening decision needs to be recorded formally. This will involve the responsible officer recording the screening outcome by using the template that will be provided by the CDP's diversity officer and then reporting the outcome to SMT for approval.

Any record of the screening decision should list the policy, name the officer carrying out the screening, assess the significance of the effect on equality and recommend a course of action in terms of equality impact assessments.

What happens next?

Once a policy has been identified as being likely to have a significant effect on equality, an EIA should be carried out. An EIA is basically a research project. It asks whether a policy disadvantages any of the target equality groups listed and, if so, what can be done to solve the problem.