



ONR Guidance Document

Carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

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Table 1: Revision Commentary

Issue No.	Description of Update(s)
1	New document
1.1	Minor formatting updates

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

This document provides guidance when completing an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). ONR is committed to promoting equality and participation in all our activities, whether this is related to the work we do with our external stakeholders or whether this is related to our responsibilities as an employer.

1.2. Scope and Applicability

As a public body we are also required to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations when making decisions and developing policies. To do this, it is necessary to understand the potential impacts of the range of internal and external activities on different groups of people.

2. What is an EIA and Why Do We Need to Complete One?

An EIA is an evidence-based approach designed to help organisations ensure that their policies, practices, events, and decision-making processes are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation.

This covers both strategic and operational activities. The term 'policy', as used throughout this document, covers the range of functions, activities, and decisions for which ONR is responsible, including for example, strategic decision-making and employment policies.

The EIA will help to ensure that:

- we understand the potential effects of the policy by assessing the impacts on different groups both external and internal
- any adverse impacts are identified, and actions identified to remove or mitigate them
- decisions are transparent and based on evidence with clear reasoning.

3. When Might I Need to Complete an EIA?

Whether an EIA is needed or not will depend on the likely impact that the policy may have and relevance of the activity to equality.

The EIA should be done when the need for a new policy or practice is identified, or when an existing one is reviewed.

Ideally, an EIA should form part of any new policy, event or activity and be factored in as early as one would for other considerations such as risk, budget or health and safety.

The [EIA template](#) can be used to prompt discussion and consideration of the relevant factors.

4. Who is Responsible for Completing and Signing Off the EIA?

Depending on the nature of the policy, event or activity, the responsibility of who should complete the assessment, who should be consulted, and who should sign off the EIA will vary. Ultimate responsibility on whether an EIA is required, and the evaluation decision(s) made after completing the EIA lies with the Senior Responsible Officer, budget holder, project board or the most relevant senior manager.

5. What is Discrimination?

Discrimination is where someone is treated less favourably or put at a disadvantage because of their protected characteristic. The different groups covered by the Equality Act are referred to as protected characteristics: disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, sex (gender), and age. Discrimination is usually unintended and can often remain undetected until there is a complaint. Improving or promoting equality is when you identify ways to remove barriers and improve participation for people or groups with a protected characteristic.

6. Building the Evidence, Making a Judgement

In cases of new policies or management decisions there may be little evidence of the potential effect on protected characteristic groups. In such cases you should make a judgement that is as reliable as possible. Consultation will strengthen these value judgements by building a consensus that can avoid obvious prejudices or assumptions.

7. Consultation

Consultation can add evidence to the assessment. Consultation is very important and key to demonstrating that organisations are meeting the equality duties, but it also needs to be proportionate and relevant. For example, a new building modification may have lesser impact, whereas an Information Technology or digital project should consider the different range of disabilities and impairments (hearing, mobile, speech, visual, neurodiversity) in more detail. Considering the degree and range of consultation will safeguard against 'groupthink' by involving a diverse range of consultees.

These are the key considerations, to avoid over-consultation on a small policy or practice and under consultation on a significant policy or an activity that has the potential to create barriers to participation.

8. Provisional Assessment

At the initial stages, you may not have all the evidence you need so you can conduct a provisional assessment. Where a provisional assessment has been carried out, there must be plans to gather the required data so that a full assessment can be completed after a reasonable time. The scale of these plans should be proportionate to the activity at hand. When there is enough evidence a full impact assessment should be prepared. Only one EIA should be created for each policy, as more evidence becomes available the provisional assessment should be built upon.

9. Valuing Differences

EIAs are about making comparisons between groups of employees, service users or stakeholders to identify differences in their needs and/or requirements. If the difference is disproportionate, then the policy may have a detrimental impact on some and not others.