



## Equality Screening Template

Get Belfast Reading project

## **Belfast City Council - Equality Screening Template**

The Council has a statutory duty to screen all policies. Please note a policy can be written or unwritten, formal or informal. This includes our strategies, plans, policies, legislative developments; and new ways of working such as – the introduction, change or end of an existing service, grant funding arrangement or facility. Please note a policy can be written or unwritten, formal or informal.

This screening template is designed to help departments consider the likely equality impacts of their proposed decisions on different groups of customers, service users, staff and visitors.

Before carrying out an equality screening exercise it is important that you have received the necessary training. To find out about the training contact –

[gilmartins@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:gilmartins@belfastcity.gov.uk) or [dennisl@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:dennisl@belfastcity.gov.uk)

The accompanying [Screening Guidance](#) note provides straightforward advice on how to carry out equality screening exercises. Detailed information about the Section 75 equality duties<sup>1</sup> and what they mean in practice is available on the Equality Commission's website.

The screening template has 4 sections to complete. These are:

**Section A** - asks you to provide details about the policy / decision that is being screened.

**Section B** - has 4 key questions that require you to outline the likely impacts on equality groups, and all supporting evidence.

**Section C** - has 4 key questions in relation to obligations under the Disability Discrimination Order

**Section D** - is the formal record of the screening decision.

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<sup>1</sup> ECNI 'Section 75 of the NI Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities' April 2010. [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

## Section A

### Details about the policy / decision to be screened

**Title of policy / decision to be screened:-**

Get Belfast Reading project

**Brief description of policy / decision to be screened:-**

*(Explain - Is this a new, revised or existing policy? Are there financial / legislative / procurement implications?)*

In line with the vision of the Cultural Framework, Belfast City Council has developed the new initiative 'Get Belfast Reading' to help attract audiences, inspire communities, and strengthen the local cultural sector. The focus of the initiative is to encourage participation across the city and focus work where there is currently limited provision.

**Aims and objectives of the policy / decision to be screened:-**

*(What is the policy trying to achieve?)*

The main aims of the project are to:

- increase awareness of and engagement in reading based activities
- stimulate the use of books and literature
- break down barriers to reading
- encourage attendance at literary events
- build awareness of local writing talent and literary heritage, and
- enhance literacy levels for all ages across the city

**On whom will the policy / decision impact?**

*Consider the internal and external impacts (both actual or potential)*

- Staff - Yes, actual participation as they will be checking book stock
- Service users – Yes, as they will have access to books and reading activity
- Other public sector organisations – yes, Libraries NI will be a partner
- Voluntary / community groups / trade unions – yes, community groups will be actively involved in most aspects of project
- Others, please specify – local organisations such as Verbal Arts Centre and Linen Hall Library will be involved

**Are there linkages to other Agencies/ Departments?**

Yes. The initiative has been developed by Belfast City Council in consultation with relevant stakeholders including Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Libraries NI, Verbal Arts Centre, BookTrust, Linen Hall Library, the Reader Organisation, and the Read On, Get On campaign. There are also links with Parks Department and the Health Trust.

## Section B

### 1. Outline consultation process achieved or planned

The initiative has been developed by Belfast City Council in consultation with relevant stakeholders including Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Libraries NI, Verbal Arts Centre, BookTrust, Linen Hall Library, the Reader Organisation, and the Read On, Get On campaign. There are also links with the Belfast Healthy Cities team. We have also discussed the scope and outline operational details of the project with BCC Community Services and BCC Parks Department.

Discussions have taken place with all of the above to agree on the various aspects of the Get Belfast Reading initiative. Various possible and actual roles have been agreed. As the project develops more consultation and discussion will take place with relevant groups such as NICEM, RNIB, Engage with Age, etc.

CONTEXT: The project links to the Council's corporate and departmental themes as follows:

Corporate theme

- Promote and Position the city
- Improve the city living experience

Department objective

- Develop Belfast's cultural offer and deliver actions within the Integrated Cultural strategy and action plan.

Service objective

- City animation

Unit theme

- Attracting Audiences

Unit strategic aim / objective

- Cultural Framework:
  - o Inspiring Communities: Removing barriers to access
  - o Attracting Audiences: Increasing the number of residents taking part in culture and arts

Additional comments:

- Belfast is and was the home of many prolific writers and poets; and it has a modern day thriving literary scene. It is part of what makes Belfast unique,

and storytelling is part of our heritage and culture.

- There is evidence to demonstrate that Belfast has low literacy levels across the population, particularly amongst children and young people.
- 9 September 2014: BBC website – ‘More than one in six children in Northern Ireland do not reach the expected level of literacy by the time they leave primary school, a new report has found.’
- September 2014: Independent ‘Read On. Get On.’ report commissioned by charity Save the Children: ‘Education inequality is worse here than almost anywhere else in Europe, with only England and Romania behind us’...
- February 2013: Independent NI Audit Office report: The Northern Ireland Audit Office examined levels of attainment in maths, reading and writing at primary and secondary schools in Northern Ireland. ‘Unacceptably large numbers of pupils are failing to achieve even minimal levels in literacy and numeracy.... The NIAO report also found a "strong correlation between between low levels of academic achievement and free school meal entitlement (an indicator of social deprivation)".

Reading, writing and storytelling can have a number of benefits within the city:

- enhances quality of life through social interaction and pleasure
- events and visual elements have positive impacts on perception of the city – local, national, international
- creates social interaction and cohesion
- educational benefits

Consultation and research above indicates that there is a need to stimulate

- Participation in the activities of reading, writing and storytelling
- awareness of Belfast’s literary history
- allow people to see the city through its writer’s eyes

## 2. Available evidence

*What evidence / information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Set out all evidence below to help inform your screening assessment. Please note: It is important to record information gathered from a variety of sources such as:*

- *Monitoring information*
- *Complaints*
- *Research /surveys*
- *Consultation exercise and other public authorities*

<b>Section 75 category</b>	<b>Details of evidence / information and engagement</b>
Religious belief	There is no evidence to suggest that there are differences in literacy levels or interest in books between various religious beliefs.
Political opinion	There is no evidence to suggest that there are differences in literacy levels or interest in books between groups of differing political opinion.
Racial group	There is no evidence to suggest that there are differences in literacy levels or interest in books between different racial groups. Where English is not a first language may be a barrier to participation.
Age	Statistics show that there are low literacy levels amongst our young people.  Older people may also suffer from being able to physically access books and read.
Marital status	There is no evidence to suggest that there are differences in literacy levels or interest in books between those of differing marital status.
Sexual orientation	There is no evidence to suggest that there are differences in literacy levels or interest in books between people of differing sexual orientation.

Men & women generally	There is no evidence to suggest that there are differences in literary levels or interest in books between men and women generally.
Disability	There is evidence from stakeholders, to suggest that factors such as personal mobility, the formats of books available to suit disability needs, social isolation, can lead to a lower interest in books or literacy levels.
Dependants	There is no evidence to suggest that there are differences in literary levels or interest in books between people with or without dependants, however those with dependants may have specific access requirements, or issues associated with social isolation, which might allow or limit participation.

**3. What is the likely impact (indicate if the policy impact is positive or negative) on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? What is the level of impact?**

Section 75 category	Likely impact?	Level of impact? Minor/Major/None
Religious belief	The book boxes will be free to use and the outdoor ones will be available at all times, which has a positive effect on equality of opportunity. The shared reading initiatives will be targeted to people representing all the section 75 equality categories, therefore enhancing equality of opportunity for participation across the city.	None
Political opinion	The book boxes will be free to use and the outdoor ones will be available at all times, which has a positive effect on equality of opportunity. The shared reading initiatives will be targeted to people representing all the section 75 equality categories, therefore enhancing equality of opportunity for participation across the city.	None

Racial group	<p>The book boxes will be free to use and the outdoor ones will be available at all times, which has a positive effect on equality of opportunity. The shared reading initiatives will be targeted to people representing all the section 75 equality categories, therefore enhancing equality of opportunity for participation across the city.</p> <p>It is noted in this context, that language may a barrier to participation.</p>	Minor
Age	<p>The book boxes will be free to use and the outdoor ones will be available at all times, which has a positive effect on equality of opportunity. The shared reading initiatives will be targeted to people representing all the section 75 equality categories, therefore enhancing equality of opportunity for participation across the city.</p> <p>Young people may experience a lack of interest in the initiative as, for the under 12's, many of the books will appear to be for adults; and older children have competing demands on their time.</p> <p>Some older people may experience social and mobility / access issues.</p>	Minor
Marital status	<p>The book boxes will be free to use and the outdoor ones will be available at all times, which has a positive effect on equality of opportunity. The shared reading initiatives will be targeted to people representing all the section 75 equality categories, therefore enhancing equality of opportunity for participation across the city.</p>	None
Sexual orientation	<p>The book boxes will be free to use and the outdoor ones will be available at all times, which has a positive effect on equality of opportunity. The shared reading initiatives will be targeted to people</p>	None

	<p>representing all the section 75 equality categories, therefore enhancing equality of opportunity for participation across the city.</p>	
Men and women generally	<p>The book boxes will be free to use and the outdoor ones will be available at all times, which has a positive effect on equality of opportunity. The shared reading initiatives will be targeted to people representing all the section 75 equality categories, therefore enhancing equality of opportunity for participation across the city.</p>	None
Disability	<p>The book boxes will be free to use and the outdoor ones will be available at all times, which has a positive effect on equality of opportunity. The shared reading initiatives will be targeted to people representing all the section 75 equality categories, therefore enhancing equality of opportunity for participation across the city.</p> <p>Disability can be a limiting factor in terms of accessing books and shared reading activity, resulting in lower levels of participation.</p> <p>Some people with a visible / invisible disability may experience social and mobility / access issues.</p>	Minor
Dependants	<p>The book boxes will be free to use and the outdoor ones will be available at all times, which has a positive effect on equality of opportunity. The shared reading initiatives will be targeted to people representing all the section 75 equality categories, therefore enhancing equality of opportunity for participation across the city.</p> <p>Some people with dependants may have social isolation issues. There are also access considerations for those who manage prams /</p>	Minor

	wheelchairs etc.	
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**4. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?**

<b>Section 75 category</b>	<b>If Yes, provide details</b>	<b>If No, provide reasons</b>
Religious belief	The locations of the book boxes and venues for the shared reading activity will be spread throughout the city, so that people within all the Section 75 equalities categories will have the opportunity to take part.	
Political opinion	The locations of the book boxes and venues for the shared reading activity will be spread throughout the city, so that people within all the Section 75 equalities categories will have the opportunity to take part.	
Racial group	<p>The locations of the book boxes and venues for the shared reading activity will be spread throughout the city, so that people within all the Section 75 equalities categories will have the opportunity to take part.</p> <p>There is potential to remove barriers to participation through providing books in different languages such as Irish and Polish, and working in partnership with organizations like NICEM and Libraries NI for advice.</p>	
Age	The locations of the book boxes and venues for the shared reading activity will be spread throughout the city, so that people within all the Section 75 equalities categories will have the opportunity to	

	<p>take part.</p> <p>To encourage young people to participate, a relevant animation element should help launch the initiative and the creation of a fun Belfast Book Machine should also encourage participation. Attractively presented book boxes will encourage interest and engage communities.</p> <p>To encourage older people to take part, we'll ensure that the initiative has information or books in braille, larger font / print, relevant titles, and that the initiative is open and available and marketed to this demographic and perhaps, to encourage community ownership, they can be in some way involved in the upkeep of the book boxes.</p>	
Marital status	<p>The locations of the book boxes and venues for the shared reading activity will be spread throughout the city, so that people within all the Section 75 equalities categories will have the opportunity to take part.</p>	
Sexual orientation	<p>The locations of the book boxes and venues for the shared reading activity will be spread throughout the city, so that people within all the Section 75 equalities categories will have the opportunity to take part.</p>	
Men and women generally	<p>The locations of the book boxes and venues for the shared reading activity will be spread throughout the city, so that people within all the Section 75 equalities categories will have the opportunity to take part.</p> <p>There is no evidence to suggest that there are differences in literary levels or interest in books</p>	

	<p>between men and women generally.</p> <p>Libraries NI have indicated that the different choices of books available in the book boxes should benefit all. The reading events should be designed and targeted to appeal to both men and women.</p>	
Disability	<p>The locations of the book boxes and venues for the shared reading activity will be spread throughout the city, so that people within all the Section 75 equalities categories will have the opportunity to take part.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to signage, font size, braille accessibility and we will work with the relevant statutory body to follow that up. We can work with RNIB and organizations such as Action on Hearing to clarify the best approach.</p>	
Dependants	<p>The locations of the book boxes and venues for the shared reading activity will be spread throughout the city, so that people within all the Section 75 equalities categories will have the opportunity to take part.</p> <p>For example, consideration will be given to pram friendly venues, timing of events taken into consideration, associated animation, etc.</p>	

5. To what extent is the policy likely to impact (positive or negatively) on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? What is the level of impact?

Good relations category	Likely impact?	Level of impact? Minor/Major/None
Religious belief		None
Political opinion		None
Racial group	The shared book boxes and the shared reading activities are likely to bring people of differing racial groups together. The books and texts used will be good quality and neutral and will create positive talking points and remove barriers to communication. Books and events in different languages will feature in the project.	Minor

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

Good relations category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief		<p>The book boxes will be physically visible and available within communities across Belfast.</p> <p>The shared reading will be open to people of all religious beliefs and will be held in diverse venues across the city.</p>

Political opinion		<p>The book boxes will be physically visible and available within communities across Belfast.</p> <p>The shared reading will be open to people of all political opinions and will be held in diverse venues across the city.</p>
Racial group	<p>The book boxes will be physically visible and available within communities across Belfast. They will be distributed in such a way that people of all racial groups will have access to them.</p> <p>The shared reading programme will be open to people of all racial groups and will be held in diverse venues across the city. The programme will be able to explore awareness of the diversity of languages.</p>	

## 7. Multiple Identities

**Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities.**

*Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.*

The book boxes will enable everyone living within communities to take part as there will be no barriers to access and the range of books will appeal to all section 75 categories.

The shared reading activity will be carried out to diverse groups across all section 75 categories.

## Section C

Belfast City Council also has legislative obligations to meet under the [Disability Discrimination Order](#) and Questions 5 -6 relate to these two areas.

### Consideration of Disability Duties

- 8. Does this proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity for the Council to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?**

***Explain your assessment in full***

Yes – it enables disabled people to take part, the book boxes should where possible be conveniently placed to enable those in wheelchairs to access books. We aim to have braille to enable blind people to access information; and shared reading will aim to bring the reading experience to everyone including those with disabilities and lack of reading ability.

- 9. Does this proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity to actively increase the participation by disabled people in public life?**

***Explain your assessment in full***

It will enable books to become available within communities, physically and visibly convenient. The shared reading will in many cases be carried out in non traditional settings and therefore aim to reduce barriers to access to shared reading activity.

**Monitoring Arrangements**

*Section 75 places a requirement the Council 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.*

*Outline what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the impact of this policy / decision on equality, good relations and disability duties.*

<b>Equality</b>	<b>Good Relations</b>	<b>Disability Duties</b>
A survey could examine the profile of users of Book Boxes and participants in the reading rooms; stock levels can be monitored which will indicate which books are most popular, usage of books in different languages, in larger font, etc. It could also look at levels of participation from younger people at events such as those including the Book Machine.	A feedback survey could be carried out to assess any good relations impacts. These may be indicated by people’s awareness of books in different languages or about different cultures; and reading events which are targeted towards minority groups. The location of the book boxes and venues for reading events will indicate a wide reach across the city.	The profile of users of Book Boxes and participants in reading events will indicate levels of disability; stock levels will be monitored and this will indicate if books intended for use by disabled members of the public are being used. Comments and feedback will ensure that book boxes are accessible and convenient to those with mobility issues.

## Section D

### Formal Record of Screening Decision

Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being screened:

**Get Belfast Reading Project**

I can confirm that the proposed policy / decision has been screened for –

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Equality of opportunity and good relations
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disabilities duties

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy / decision is –

***\*place an X in the appropriate box below***

<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>*Screened In</b> – Necessary to conduct a full EQIA
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>*Screened Out</b> – No EQIA necessary (no impacts) Provide a brief note here to explain how this decision was reached: there are only positive impacts to all S75 groups within this policy
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>* Screened Out - Mitigating Actions</b> (minor impacts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide a brief note here to explain how this decision was reached: Explain what mitigating actions and / or policy changes will now be introduced:</li></ul> <p><b>Mitigating actions</b></p> <p>Ensure that books are available in different formats, including Braille and large print, and accessible signage eg in Braille on side of boxes.</p> <p>Libraries NI who are one of our partners will be supplying book stock and are aware of the needs of all users, and advice will be taken from relevant organizations eg. RNIB.</p> <p>There will be books in different languages such as Irish and Polish, and again in partnership with Libraries NI and discussions with relevant</p>
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organizations such as NICEM.

As the book boxes will be in the public domain and available to access 24/7, there are challenges in monitoring the equality, good relations and disability impacts but this will be explored. Stock levels will be monitored and this will indicate which books are most popular and indicate what the uptake is like from the various section 75 categories, eg. the usage of the books intended for use by disabled members of public. The location of the book boxes will be located throughout the city, and locations will be carefully chosen in order to promote access to all communities.

## **Formal Record of Screening Decision** (cont)

### **Screening assessment completed by (Officer level) -**

Name: Christine O'Toole

Date: 15.5.15

Department: Development

Signature: please insert a scanned image of your signature below

### **Screening decision approved by -**

Name: Brian Johnston

Date: 15.5.15

Department / Job Title: Tourism, Culture, Arts and Heritage Development Manager

Signature: please insert a scanned image of your signature below

Please save the final version of the completed screening form and forward to the Equality and Diversity Officer – [gilmartins@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:gilmartins@belfastcity.gov.uk) or [dennisl@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:dennisl@belfastcity.gov.uk) . The screening form will be placed on the BCC website and a link provided to the Council's Section 75 consultees.

For more information about equality screening contact –

**Stella Gilmartin / Lorraine Dennis**

**Equality & Diversity Officer (*job-share*)**

**Belfast City Council**

**City Hall**

**Belfast**

**BT1 5GS**

**Telephone: 028 90270511**

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