

People impact assessments (PIA)

A robust process for people impact assessments (PIA) also known as equality impact assessments, to ensure inclusive and equitable outcomes across policing policies and practices.

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Key details

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| Does it work? | Untested – new or innovative |
| Focus | Organisational |
| Topic | Diversity and inclusion |
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| Region | North East |
| Partners | Police |
| Stage of practice | The practice is implemented. |
| Start date | September 2023 |
| Scale of initiative | Local |
| Target group | Workforce |

Aim

- to ensure that policies, practices, and decisions do not inadvertently disadvantage individuals or groups with protected characteristics
- to capture the positive impact of decisions or activities, demonstrating the force's commitment to their equality objectives

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are to:

- identifying and mitigating potential discrimination – ensuring that policies, practices, or decisions do not unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010
- promoting equality of opportunity – actively considering how to remove or reduce barriers and disadvantages faced by underrepresented or marginalised groups
- fostering good relations – encouraging understanding and positive relationships between different groups, particularly where tensions or inequalities may exist
- embedding inclusive decision-making – ensuring that equality considerations are built into the planning, development, and implementation stages of any initiative, rather than being an afterthought
- improving transparency and accountability – providing a clear rationale for decisions and demonstrating due regard to equality duties, which can build trust with both internal and external stakeholders
- supporting compliance with legal duties – helping the force meet their obligations under the public sector equality duty (PSED) and other relevant legislation

Description

An audit from the previous process showed that colleagues held several misconceptions, such as:

- individuals were required to have specialist training to complete assessments
- only diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) related work required an assessment
- assessments should be submitted after completion of the work

The aim of implementing the PIA was to create a process that:

- effectively managed risk

- captured evidence of progress towards force equality objectives
- met the legislative duty of paying due regard to individuals from groups with protected characteristics
- increased awareness, capability and understanding across the workforce with respect to DEI

The first step was to ensure the DEI team were confident and capable in understanding equality impact assessments to effectively support colleagues. Training was delivered Diversity Mackenzie, the UK's leading DEI consultancy.

Following advice from the consultants, the name of the process was changed to PIAs to demystify the level of qualifications or experience needed. This shifted the focus to the specific need of capturing the impact of change on people, with respect to protected characteristics.

The practice was designed to embed equality considerations at relevant stages of decision-making, with a focus on mitigating unintended bias and promoting fairness for all communities. It helps organisations identify potential inequalities at an early stage, consider how to eliminate discrimination, and promote fairness and inclusion. Decisions are justified, mitigated or removed and the assessment demonstrates this as transparently as possible, ensuring an evidence base of data and information also. By embedding PIA into decision-making, organisations can create more equitable outcomes and build trust with both their workforce and the communities they serve.

Phase one of the project included:

- quality assurance measures so assessments can be reviewed by trained colleagues, including the creation of a risk register for any identified risks
- a training plan to provide assessment training for colleagues
- an intranet hub which provided a one-stop shop for information and guidance relating to PIAs, including videos, guidance and links to reports that may be relevant
- a technical solution to provide a library of PIAs, including highlighting best practice, as well as a secure folder for assessments which are sensitive or confidential
- mapping of other processes, such as policy development, chief officer team papers, change papers and project management, to ensure a PIA accompanies these papers at the point a decision is made

Phase two seeks to improve further through regular reporting on compliance, improving access to relevant data and information, and developing awareness and training based on known common

issues.

Overall impact

There have been examples where the PIAs have changed an original decision, and the force now have a database of completed assessments which have been quality assured to evidence progress towards the equality objectives. The force also have an effective risk management process where cases can be escalated to the relevant level.

Phase one key performance metrics show that 94% of policies and 100% of known projects or practices have a quality assured PIA to date.

In terms of decision papers, the completion of assessments rose from 38% in 2022 to 65% in 2023.

Learning

- Securing executive buy-in from chief officers and senior leaders was essential to embedding the process meaningfully. The force established the importance of a clear expectation that all decision papers and policies must be accompanied by a quality-assured PIAs before progressing. This creates a culture of accountability and helps to normalise the process across the organisation.
- To support teams in completing assessments confidently, the force developed a dedicated intranet hub offering step-by-step guidance, explainer videos, frequently asked questions, and templates. Additionally, the DEI team provided case-by-case support on request, ensuring colleagues felt supported rather than burdened.
- Key learning from the force is that clarity, accessibility, and leadership endorsement are critical to success. Forces looking to implement a similar approach should prioritise early engagement with senior leaders, invest in user-friendly resources, and offer practical support to build confidence and consistency.
- Further learning points specifically for the team managing the assessment process are to ensure that external training is provided to all those who support the workforce in completing assessments and ensuring that accountability is proportionate (i.e. do not delay decision-making unnecessarily but ensure that assessments are undertaken at the most appropriate time).
- Finally, the reporting of data and information on the performance of the assessment process has been instrumental. Time has been spent honing the performance reports to ensure that strategic

leads receive relevant information to support changes to the management of the assessment process. This includes adding additional details on why there are delays to assessment completion and where there is a reduced number of completions or quality undertaking a deeper insight report to understand why.

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