

Health inequalities impact assessment: Guidance for workshop facilitators

A step-by-step guide to running a scoping workshop and how to identify the main areas of impact of a policy.



Role of the facilitator

Your role is to:

- guide the group through the workbook
- ensure everyone is able to participate and the conversation is not dominated by one or two individuals
- challenge the group if they skip over potential impacts
- summarise the key impacts at the end
- ensure that notes are collated from you, the scribe and any other note-takers to enable a comprehensive report of the discussions to be drafted soon after the workshop.

The facilitator may be the policy lead or someone impartial from outwith the policy development team.

Preparation in advance of the workshop

It will be helpful to ensure that, as facilitator, you have a clear understanding of:

- the policy aims and objectives
- who is attending the workshop, and how to best capture the knowledge/ experiences of population groups
- how much time has been allocated for the workshop
- the information to be given to participants in advance, and at the beginning, of the workshop
- any population groups or human rights obligations that are relevant to the policy but not listed in the workbook
- how you intend to run the workshop and what materials you will need (flipchart etc.)
- who will take on the role of scribe at the workshop
- who will be responsible for drafting the workshop report (this is usually the policy lead).

It is not necessary for you to have a detailed understanding of the policy, although some understanding of the background and rationale is helpful. Having a good working knowledge of potential inequalities issues is beneficial. Previous guidance ([HIIA: Key issues to consider](#)) provides some suggestions and reference documents.

The [Scottish Government Equalities Evidence Finder](#) provides extracts from national surveys and other sources related to 15 policy areas (one of which is health, social care and sport) for seven of the nine protected characteristics.

The [Scottish Health Survey Topic Report: Equality Groups](#) includes data on health behaviours and health characteristics broken down by the following equality groups: gender; age; ethnic group; religion; disability; and sexual orientation.

You may also find it helpful to search for published equality, health or human rights assessments on similar policies. The Equality Team at NHS Health Scotland can provide support and guidance, and has information on protected characteristics on the [equality pages](#) of their website.

At the workshop

The workshop will usually take around three hours to complete, depending on the scale of the policy. The group will need a comfort break at some point during this process. A suggested agenda is given on page 3 to help you plan the timings of the workshop. It is important to keep to good time (or ask the scribe to do this for you) and to move the discussion on if the group becomes bogged down in a particular issue. During the discussion it is important for you (or the scribe) to capture all the points made – a [scribe template](#) is provided to help do this.

It may be useful to display a flipchart for each question and provide post-it notes for participants. Participants will then be able to add any potential impacts not fully captured during the discussion.

The workshop might not be able to identify impacts in all areas – this is okay. Research questions can be formed later to fill any gaps. Remember, however, that there may simply be no significant impacts in some areas.

Encourage participants to be explicit on what the impact will be and how it will be caused. Explore whether identified impacts will apply to other groups/areas too and how these impacts might vary in different circumstances. Through the course of discussion the group may identify immediate actions that could be undertaken and these should be captured by you (or the scribe).

Do not be concerned if a lack of actions are identified. The main purpose of the workshop is to identify potential impacts. Actions will be identified later in the HIA process.

It is suggested that the workshop follows this process:

1 Introductions

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Ask all participants to introduce themselves and their interest or involvement in the policy or policy area.

If you intend to record the entire workshop using an electronic device, you should tell participants this before the workshop begins and ask if there are any objections. If anyone has concerns that cannot quickly be addressed by reassurances (such as the need for accuracy and the confidentiality of such recordings) then it would be inappropriate to record the workshop.

2 Background and introduction to the workshop

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Background to HIA

You may want to establish some ground rules for the discussion. It is helpful to remind the group that the aim of the workshop is to identify 'potential' areas of impact of the policy. Give an outline of the workshop running order and explain that potential impacts may be **positive or negative** and they may impact differently on different population groups. The group might find it useful if you provide examples of what an impact may be under each question area.

The group members have been asked to participate based on their existing knowledge and expertise. The workshop is a structured approach to identifying all relevant issues by bringing together participants to share ideas. However participants are not expected to be able to provide evidence to support their opinions; evidence will be sought at a later stage of the assessment process.

An example of an introductory presentation is available from [NHS Health Scotland](#).

Background to the policy

The policy lead should go through the intended changes that will occur as a result of this policy. Other participants should then be invited to ask questions, comment or add their own thoughts about the policy. It is important that everyone present has a good enough grasp of the policy to meaningfully discuss how it might impact on different groups of people.

3 The workbook

Question 1: Who will be affected by this policy?

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Before looking at the population groups in question 2, ask the workshop who will be affected by the policy. For example, for a health policy this might be a particular group of patients, staff groups, carers etc. Write down all the groups suggestions and display them during the whole workshop. This will be particularly helpful when summarising the key impacts.

Question 2: How will the policy impact on people?

Suggested time: 80 minutes (50 minute discussion; 15 minute break; 15 minute wrap up).

You should now start discussing the population groups. Ask participants to consider how everyone will achieve the right to the highest possible standard of health through the policy. Key questions to help think about potential impacts are:

- Is the policy **available** to different population groups?
- Is the policy **accessible**, (e.g. in terms of physical access, communication needs, transport needs, health literacy, childcare needs, knowledge and confidence)?
- Is the policy **acceptable** to different population groups (e.g. is it sensitive to age, culture and sex)?
- Is the policy of **good quality**, enabling it to have its desired effects?

The list of affected groups identified in question 1 is likely to contain people in each of the population groups listed. You could ask the participants to start with a group they have most knowledge of, or prompt them by starting with:

Will people be impacted differently because of their age? For example, how will this policy affect older people? Positively? Negatively?

As we are not all defined by one characteristic, it is important that participants are encouraged to think how the policy will impact people across a combination of groups, as well as how impacts may result from increased risk factors contributing to poorer health. Challenge the group if they suggest a blanket response, such as that 'the policy is universal so it will impact equally on all groups'. This is rarely the case and the point is to find the ways that some groups of people may be differentially affected.

This part of the workshop is likely to take the longest. It might be useful to have a comfort break and use the time to check which areas still need to be covered or need further probing with the policy lead and scribe.

Tip: Ask the workshop attendees how the policy might lead to a 'potential' impact and record this. For example, instead of recording:

- a) The plan should support greater dignity and care for people with dementia.

You might record:

- b) The plan should support greater dignity for people with dementia because a key theme of the policy is the promotion of privacy and personal living space for individuals within care homes.

Question 3: How will the policy impact on the causes of health inequalities?
Suggested time: 20 minutes

Once you have discussed the population groups, you should consider whether the policy has any impact on the causes of health inequalities and whether there is opportunity (through the policy) to act on these. The causes listed are all known to impact on people's health and wellbeing. Go through each point and ask the group if the policy is likely to impact on this issue and, if so, which population groups could be affected.

Don't worry if there is some repetition from earlier discussions as it is more important to identify the impacts, and there will be the opportunity to summarise the key points at the end.

Further information on the causes of health inequalities can be found in [HIIA: Answers to frequently asked questions](#) and [NHS Health Scotland's Health Inequalities Policy Review](#).

Question 4: How will the policy impact on people's human rights?
Suggested time: 20 minutes

You should then discuss the impact on human rights, considering if and how the policy might positively or negatively impact on people's ability to enjoy their legally-protected rights. You have already considered the Right to Health under question 2 by focusing on a policy's availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality. The human rights listed in this question have particular relevance to health and social care and are from the UK Human Rights Act. Other human rights obligations might

also be relevant to the policy (for example, the rights of the child) and it would be useful to discuss this with the policy lead before the workshop.

Question 5: Will there be any cumulative impacts as a result of the relationship between this policy and others?

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Ask the participants if they are aware of other policies or changes which could result in further impacts of this policy. For example, these could be changes to welfare, transport or other related services which could further impact on the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of this policy.

Question 6: What sources of evidence have informed your impact assessment?

Suggested time: 15 minutes

Participants are not expected to bring formal pieces of evidence with them to the workshop. Identify any themes emerging for potential impacts and use this time to gather information from the participants about their respective experiences and get directions to further sources of evidence. The policy lead will also be able to contribute evidence sources that have informed the development of the policy.

4 Summary of discussion and next steps

Suggested time: 15 minutes

During the discussion there will probably be some duplication. Similar impacts may affect several populations, for example, relocation of a service would affect all population groups whereas one underlying impact of the policy (e.g. reducing income levels) may affect the causes of health inequalities at different levels. At this point you (or the scribe) could summarise this by noting the key areas of impact from each question on a flipchart.

When conducting impact assessment you should always bear in mind the need to 'pay due regard' to the three elements of the general equality duty (Equality Act 2010):

1. To eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
2. To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it
3. To foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

This means that you must identify and eliminate (through appropriate policy changes) any impacts that could amount to unlawful discrimination under the act. Wherever possible you should also record any impacts that enable the policy to 'advance equality of opportunity' or 'foster good relations.'

The policy lead will add to this by implementing actions to mitigate negative impacts. If time allows, you could jot down emerging key questions for further evidence, or for the policy, from the earlier discussions. Don't worry if you don't have time to identify a complete list of questions or evidence sources at this stage – these issues will be re-examined during the next phase of the assessment.

To close the workshop, thank the group for their participation and share the intended next steps with them. Tell them that a draft report of the workshop will be circulated for comment and try to give an indication of expected timescales. You may also wish to briefly describe the next stages of the HIA process that will take place after this, such as identifying research questions, gathering evidence and writing the final report. If the project lead has agreed, you may wish to say that following any evidence gathering phase, final recommendations will be circulated for comment if these have changed from the draft report. This may help participants to better understand how their contribution has helped to shape the final version of the policy.

Write up

Ensure everyone taking notes has collated them into one version of the [scribe template](#). This will then be used to write up the findings of the workshop using the [report template](#). The report should make clear what the potential impacts will be and how they will be caused. It will usually be the policy lead's responsibility to write up the report, although they might find it useful to have your input too. The template for workshop reports makes it clear that findings reflect discussion among stakeholders but may not be a definitive statement of impacts as further evidence may be required. It is the responsibility of the policy lead to correct any factual inaccuracies and circulate the report to the wider group for any comments.