

Policy Title: A Charter for Effective Participation and Communication between Solicitors and Litigants in Person in Northern Ireland

Decision: Screen out, with mitigation

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Date of Completion: 27 August 2025

Part 1: Policy Scoping

Information about the policy

Name of the Policy

A Charter for Effective Participation and Communication between Solicitors and Litigants in Person in Northern Ireland

Is this an existing, revised, or new policy?

This is new policy which has been co-produced between Ulster University, members of the Law Society NI and the Litigant in Person Reference Group, with a design group comprised of academics, solicitors, litigants in person, McKenzie Friends and other people with lived relevant and/or professional experience. The involvement of these partners was part of a Human Centred Design process to develop a draft Charter for solicitors and litigants in person in family and civil proceedings. These participants are not designated public authorities and the Charter is not an Ulster University policy but has been developed in conjunction with the University. The University is completing an equality screening process to satisfy the commitment set out in our equality scheme, that is, in carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

What is it trying to achieve?

The Charter is an outcome of the wider research work on litigants in person in Northern Ireland.

This Charter is intended for the people involved in Civil or Family Proceedings in Northern Ireland where one party does not have legal representation. We refer to someone in this position as a Litigant in Person, or 'LIP' for short.

Contact between a LIP and solicitor is vital to the smooth running of a case and can result in agreement between the parties, saving time, costs and stress.

Research shows that a LIP may be unaware they can deal directly with the solicitor to resolve a legal issue, or they may lack confidence or not know how to move discussions forward or reach agreements. Solicitors may have had difficult interactions with a LIP in the past and might be cautious of direct contact or they may sense that a LIP is defensive about dealing directly with them.

These guidelines present ways to promote cordial, professional contact in the interests of justice. It contains suggested actions and conduct for solicitors and LIPs to follow to promote fairness, effective participation, and mutual respect.

In cases where there is a LIP, all parties are asked to be guided by and adopt the actions and conduct in this Charter. The judge hearing the case may ask all parties whether they have read the document and whether they agree to be guided by it.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the policy? If so, explain how below.

Individuals who fall within any of the section 75 categories could potentially benefit from the Charter. In particular, and because of the potential use of the Charter by litigants and solicitors in family court, we anticipate that there will be a particular benefit to people within the following section 75 categories:

- Dependants
- Disability
- Sex

The Policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in these categories during legal proceedings.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The policy was co-produced with Ulster University School of Law, members of the Law Society NI, the Litigant in Person Reference Group, litigants in person, McKenzie Friends, and other people with lived experience and professional expertise relevant to litigating in person.

The project was initiated by the Law Society of NI who were concerned to hear about the difficult experiences that litigants in person had during their legal proceedings that were discussed as part of the public conference launching research, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, on *Understanding and supporting legal participation for litigants in person*. The Law Society wanted to generate a document to help both solicitors and litigants in person navigate the litigation relationship, when one party in the case is legally represented and the other is not. Researchers at Ulster University were contacted to advise on whether we might assist with the creation of such a document. Our recommendation was that this document was created in partnership with litigants in person and other groups and individuals with relevant experience and that a Human Centred Design methodology would be employed to achieve this. The research team had tested this methodology as part of their research and had used this approach to develop an information-based website and pathfinder tool to assist those considering, taking or responding to proceedings in the family court. The website was initially developed as a prototype in 2021, as part of the penultimate step in the Human Centred Design process, and was used to gather feedback on how it could be improved. The website was then launched in April 2022 after having incorporated the relevant feedback. This website has been sponsored by the Department of Justice since 2022 and the Department is currently working to bring

the website within the Justice NI web resources so it can own and maintain it for the future. Both the research that led to the creation of the website and the impact that this has had on Departmental policy are significant in research terms, particularly in relation to the UK-wide Research Excellence Framework which all universities are subject to. The research on litigant in person experiences will form a substantial element of the School of Law's submission to the Research Excellence Framework, currently scheduled for 2029.

The proposal to use this Human Centred Design methodology to develop a document supporting solicitors and litigants in person was put to the Litigant in Person Reference Group for discussion and feedback. The Group were advised that workshops were planned for October/November 2024, what the workshops would focus on and how these would be conducted, and it was agreed that this was a potentially important and groundbreaking initiative in this jurisdiction that should proceed.

Recruitment for the workshop was conducted by members of Ulster University, the Law Society, the Litigant in Person Reference Group and through word-of-mouth among litigant in person support groups which had been involved in the earlier research projects that Ulster University had conducted. The participants in the workshops formed a design group and five design workshops were held (on 9th, 16th and 23rd October, 20th November 2024 and 15th January 2025) to develop a prototype document. These workshops were held at Ulster University, with the final workshop being conducted online. The prototype document, in the form of a draft Charter, was approved by the Group and the draft Charter was launched at a public event on 18th March 2025, inviting feedback on the content, via an online form or as freehand responses to the litigant in person project email address.

Who owns and implements the policy?

This is a public voluntary charter, which has been developed and promoted by members of the Law Society of NI, the Litigant in Person Reference Group, litigants in person, McKenzie Friends, and other people with lived experience and professional expertise relevant to litigating in person.

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to or weaken the intended aim or outcome of the policy?

Yes

If yes, are they financial, legislative or other?

Other

As this is a voluntary Charter, how it is implemented will depend on buy-in from those for whom it is designed to benefit. If solicitors, litigants in person or McKenzie Friends are not aware of it or decide not to use it, they will not be assisted by it. We anticipate that continued feedback from users and legal professionals will enhance the content and implementation of the Charter.

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

- Other – legal professionals; members of the public who are litigants in person; McKenzie Friends

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they and who owns them?

Policy: Ulster University People, Place and Partnership - Delivering Sustainable Futures for all Strategy

Policy owner: Vice-Chancellor

Policy: Ulster University Research Strategy 2023-2028

Policy owner: Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research

Policy: Ulster University Equality Scheme

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: Ulster University Equal Opportunities Policy

Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Available evidence

What evidence or information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Please specify details for each of the Section 75 categories below.

Religious Belief

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2024, our staff profile was 52.0% Catholic and 48.0% Protestant. Compared with 6 February 2019, this indicates a 2.9% increase in Catholic staff.

In the Academic Year (AY) 2023 - 2024, 58.3% of our students identified as Christian and 11.1% identified as having 'No Religion'. Compared with AY 2018-2019, this indicates an 18.2% decrease in students who identified as Christian and a 2.5% decrease in students who identified as having 'No Religion'.

There is no public data on the Religious Belief of the litigant in person population. We do have limited information on a group of litigants in person who participated in our research between 2016-18, collected via a voluntary screening form on equality characteristics. The participant group is not a representative sample of the litigant in person population but it provides the only indication available.

On the basis of this data on the litigant in person population of 121 within our research sample, 31% were Catholic, 35% were Protestant, 27% identified with no religion and 7% were of other faiths.

Political Opinion

The University does not collect information on Political Opinion or make assumptions regarding Political Opinion based on Community Background.

There is no public data on the Political Opinion of the litigant in person population. We do have limited information on a group of litigants in person who participated in our research between 2016-18, collected via a voluntary screening form on equality characteristics. The participant group is not a representative sample of the litigant in person population but it provides the only indication available.

On the basis of this data on the litigant in person population of 115 within our research sample, 20% were Nationalist, 17% were Unionist, 50% were of Other political opinions and 12% had no political opinion.

Racial Group

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2024, our staff profile was 92.8% White and 7.2% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME). This indicates a 1.8% increase in BME staff compared with 2019.

In AY 2023 - 2024, 9.9% of students identified as BME. This indicates a 4.9% increase in BME students compared with AY 2018 - 2019.

Our BME profile suggests that we are twice as diverse as the local population, as the Northern Ireland Census 2021 suggests that 3.4% of the NI population is BME.

There is no public data on the Racial Group of the litigant in person population. We do have limited information on a group of litigants in person who participated in our research between 2016-18, collected via a voluntary screening form on equality characteristics. The participant group is not a representative sample of the litigant in person population but it provides the only indication available.

On the basis of this data on the litigant in person population of 122 within our research sample, 98% were White, 2% were Black African, 1% was Roma.

Age

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2024, 31.1% of our staff were in the 46-55 age band and 25.8% of staff were in the 36-45 age band. 26.2% of staff were aged '56 and above', which represents a 3.8% increase compared to 2019.

In AY 2023 - 2024, the majority of students (67.0%) were aged '21 and under 40'. This indicates a 5.6% increase in students within this age band compared with AY 2018 - 2019.

There is no public data on the Age of the litigant in person population. We do have limited information on a group of litigants in person who participated in our research between 2016-18, collected via a voluntary screening form on equality characteristics. The participant group is not a representative sample of the litigant in person population but it provides the only indication available.

On the basis of this data on the litigant in person population of 123 within our research sample, 39% were aged 36 to 45; 28% were 46 to 55; 16% were 26 to 35; 11% were 56-65; 3% were 17-25 and 2% were over 66.

Marital Status

The University's EO data were reviewed. In February 2024, 56.0% of staff were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership', a decrease of 6.0% compared to 2019.

In AY 2023 - 2024, 63.8% of students were 'Single', a 14.6% decrease compared with AY 2018 - 2019.

There is no public data on the Marital Status of the litigant in person population. We do have limited information on a group of litigants in person who participated in our research between 2016-18, collected via a voluntary screening form on equality characteristics. The participant group is not a representative sample of the litigant in person population but it provides the only indication available.

On the basis of this data on the litigant in person population of 123 within our research sample, 29% were married, in a civil partnership or co-habiting; 29% were separated; 26% were single; 15% were divorced; and 1% was widowed. It should be noted that many in the research sample were in court proceedings because of issues related to marital separation.

Sexual Orientation

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2024, 74.0% of staff were 'Heterosexual'; 4.3% were 'LGBT+' and 21.4% were 'Not Known'.

Although we collect student data on sexual orientation, this is not considered to be reliable.

There is no public data on the Sexual Orientation of the litigant in person population. We do have limited information on a group of litigants in person who participated in our research between 2016-18, collected via a voluntary screening form on equality characteristics. The participant group is not a representative sample of the litigant in person population but it provides the only indication available.

On the basis of this data on the litigant in person population of 117 within our research sample, 97% were heterosexual and 3% were gay or lesbian. No other orientation was declared.

Men and Women generally

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2024, 58.0% of staff were 'Female'. This indicates a 2.0% increase in female staff compared with 2019.

In AY 2023 - 2024, 61.2% of students were 'Female', a 4.3% increase compared with AY 2018 - 2019.

In a dataset of litigants in person in the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals database provided to the research team for 2012-2016, 60% of litigants in person were male and 40% were female. No other identification was collected.

There is no other more current public data on the sex of the litigant in person population. We do have limited information on a group of litigants in person who participated in our research between 2016-18, collected via a voluntary screening form on equality characteristics. The participant group is not a representative sample of the litigant in person population but it provides the only indication available.

On the basis of this data on the litigant in person population of 123 within our research sample, 73%% were men, 27% were women. No other gender was declared by the sample.

Disability

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2024, 6.0% of staff declared a disability, an increase of 1.2% compared with 2019.

In AY 2023 - 2024, 8.4% of students declared a disability, an decrease of 2.0% compared with AY 2018 - 2019.

Our disability declaration rate is lower than expected, compared with the local population. The NI Census (2021) found that 24% of the NI population stated that their day-to-day activities **were limited** because of a long-standing health problem or disability.

There is no public data on the Disability of the litigant in person population. We do have limited information on a group of litigants in person who participated in our research between 2016-18, collected via a voluntary screening form on equality characteristics. The participant group is not a representative sample of the litigant in person population but it provides the only indication available.

On the basis of this data on the litigant in person population of 123 within our research sample, 6% declared a disability and 94% declared no disability.

Dependants

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2024, 43.8% of staff had dependants. This indicates a decrease of 3.9% compared with 2019.

In AY 2023 - 2024, 11.4% of students declared they had dependants, a decrease of 4.6% compared to AY 2018 - 2019.

There is no public data on the number of dependents that litigants in person have in the population. We do have limited information on a group of litigants in person who participated in our research between 2016-18, collected via a voluntary screening form on equality characteristics. The participant group is not a representative sample of the litigant in person population but it provides the only indication available.

On the basis of this data on the litigant in person population of 123 within our research sample, 85% had dependents (either children or other family members who depended on them) and 15% did not.

It should be noted that many in the sample of litigants in person were in court proceedings about determining the residence of children of separating families.

Needs, experience and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy or decision? (Please specify for each of the Section 75 categories below the needs, experiences and priorities)

Religious Belief

The Equal Treatment Bench Book (July 2024) is a guide for judges in England and Wales on different aspects of their professional conduct and responsibilities. Judges in Northern Ireland also take the Bench Book into account. The Bench Book reminds judges to be aware of and sensitive to religious observances, such as holy days, fasting days, dress or ritual purity.

Political Opinion

The Equal Treatment Bench Book (July 2024) is a guide for judges in England and Wales on different aspects of their professional conduct and responsibilities. Judges in Northern Ireland also take the Bench Book into account. The Bench Book reminds judges of the right to speak Welsh which would require the judge to ensure Welsh speakers are treated equally to English speakers by enabling them to participate in the language they feel most at home. The Charter does not cover the situation where a political point is being made about using Irish or Ulster Scots.

Our research showed that some Litigants in Person and McKenzie Friends may try to make political points through litigation but not ones related to the sectarian divide. These are related to their action not to discriminatory actions on the part of other court actors.

Racial Group

The Equal Treatment Bench Book (July 2024) is a guide for judges in England and Wales on different aspects of their professional conduct and responsibilities. Judges in Northern Ireland also take the Bench Book into account. The Bench Book reminds judges that attention should be paid to intercultural communication, including awareness of language barriers, cultural differences and lack of familiarity with each other's culture. Awareness of the need for interpretation and sensitivity to cultural difference is important for all parties.

Age

The Equal Treatment Bench Book (July 2024) is a guide for judges in England and Wales on different aspects of their professional conduct and responsibilities. Judges in Northern Ireland also take the Bench Book into account. The Bench Book reminds judges that people under 25 may be less mature than older litigants. It is also likely to

be the case that some older people face may face difficulties when using technology such as email or online hearings, if they are not digitally competent. Anecdotally, as people age, they are more likely to be diagnosed with or acquire a disability – please see the different needs, experiences and priorities relating to disability, detailed below.

Marital Status

None identified

Sexual Orientation

The Equal Treatment Bench Book (July 2024) is a guide for judges in England and Wales on different aspects of their professional conduct and responsibilities. Judges in Northern Ireland also take the Bench Book into account. The Bench Book highlights the need for awareness of and sensitivity towards litigants' sexual orientation and the use of acceptable terminology.

Men and Women generally

The Equal Treatment Bench Book (July 2024) is a guide for judges in England and Wales on different aspects of their professional conduct and responsibilities. Judges in Northern Ireland also take the Bench Book into account. The Bench Book highlights the need to be aware of and sensitive towards:

- Litigants' caring commitments, for example when scheduling review hearings. This applies to men and women but may predominantly affect mainly women who will be more likely to have caring responsibilities.
- The potential of litigants in person being victims of abuse and coercive control, and Female Genital Mutilation, amongst other forms of violence against women.
- Menopause symptoms in women aged 45-55
- Pregnant and breast-feeding women

Our research also noted the marked gendered approach in the advice sector where some organisations take a particular gendered approach in delivering services.

In the workshops that we held with our human-centred design group, participants identified that there would be particular experiences to be considered for male and female litigants in person, including finances, caring responsibilities, and domestic violence or abuse. The group was able to consider these experiences as part of the drafting of the Charter.

Disability

The Equal Treatment Bench Book (July 2024) is a guide for judges in England and Wales on different aspects of their professional conduct and responsibilities. Judges in Northern Ireland also take the Bench Book into account. The Bench Book highlights the need to ensure appropriate reasonable adjustments are made for any

individuals who have a disability which might interfere with their ability to have a full and fair hearing. This may include advance planning, adjusted communications, and different timescales. Research for the Ministry of Justice in 2014 noted that half of the sample of 399 Family Court litigants presented with one or more of the following: physical disability, ill-health, behavioural disorders and learning difficulties.

From our findings in our first research study (published in 2018) stress and mental ill-health were common among litigants in person because the process of litigating in person is a contributing factor. This is noted in the draft Charter.

In the workshops that we held with our human-centred design group, participants identified additional experiences relating to disabled litigants in person, including issues impacting on neurodivergent litigants in person, that were considered as part of the drafting of the Charter. We also consulted with the Litigant in Person Reference Group (which includes a representative from Disability Action) on the development and progress of the draft Charter.

Anecdotally, as people age, they are more likely to be diagnosed with or acquire a disability – please see the different needs, experiences and priorities relating to age, detailed above.

Dependants

The Equal Treatment Bench Book (July 2024) is a guide for judges in England and Wales on different aspects of their professional conduct and responsibilities. Judges in Northern Ireland also take the Bench Book into account. The Bench Book highlights the need for awareness of and sensitivity towards:

- caring commitments, for example when scheduling review hearings.

This applies to men and women but may predominantly affect mainly women who will be more likely to have caring responsibilities.

In the workshops that we held with our human-centred design group, participants identified that there would be particular experiences to be considered for litigants in person relating to mothers and to fathers in family courts, including finances, caring responsibilities, domestic violence or abuse. These were considered as part of the drafting of the Charter.

Consultation

Consultation with relevant groups, organisations or individuals about the policy can provide useful information about issues or opportunities which are specifically related to them (that is evidence to inform the policy).

Please indicate whether you carried out or intend to carry out any consultation exercises prior to equality screening?

Yes

The following were consulted in the development of the draft charter –

- Members of the Law Society NI
- The Litigant in Person Reference Group, whose membership includes 8 litigants in person and representatives from
 - Disability Action
 - School of Law, Ulster University
 - Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
 - Voluntary sector
 - Law Society NI
 - Bar Council NI
 - A Judge

The Department of Justice and the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service also participate in the Group as attendees rather than members.

- The Human Centred Design Group, whose membership includes litigants in person and McKenzie Friends and representatives from:
 - Voluntary sector
 - Statutory sector
 - Members of the Law Society NI
- The Impact Manager for Innovation and Enterprise for the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
- Head of School of Law
- Research Director for Law

Part 2: Screening questions

Introduction

The answers to the following screening questions will assist the University in making a decision whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment on the policy. The following information is provided to help you to identify and comment on the level of likely impact of the policy in question 1 to 4.

Select 'major' impact if:

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there are insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

Select 'minor' impact if:

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunities for particular groups of disadvantaged people;

- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations;
- e) Differential impact observed and opportunities exist to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Select 'none' if:

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations;
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations.

Taking into account the evidence presented in Part 1, please complete the screening questions (Question 1 to 4).

Screening questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 categories?

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious Belief**

This policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group because it presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings.

What is the level of impact?

Minor +

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**

This policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group because it presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings.

Level of impact

Minor+

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**

This policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group because it presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings.

Level of impact

Minor+

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**

This policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group because it presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings.

Level of impact

Minor+

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**

This policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group because it presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings.

Level of impact

Minor+

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**

This policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group because it presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings.

Level of impact

Minor+

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women generally**

The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category as the policy presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings, particularly women.

Level of impact

Minor +

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**

The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category as the policy presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings, particularly disabled people.

Level of impact
Minor +

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**

The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category as the policy presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings, particularly people with dependants.

Level of impact
Minor+

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories?

Religious Belief

No – The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category as the policy presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings

Political Opinion

No – The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category as the policy presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings

Racial Group

No – The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category as the policy presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings

Age

No – The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category as the policy presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings

Marital Status

No – The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category as the policy presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings

Sexual Orientation

No – The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category as the policy presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings

Men and Women generally

No – The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category as the policy presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings

Disability

Yes – We are keen to address feedback received during the consultation phase to ensure that this category of people is afforded equality of opportunity

Dependants

No – The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category as the policy presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The policy sets out to enhance the experiences of people in this category during legal proceedings

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Religious Belief

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious Belief**

The policy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief because it has no relevance to good relations.

Level of impact

None

Political Opinion

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**

The policy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different political opinion because it has no relevance to good relations.

Level of impact

None

Racial Group

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**

The policy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different racial groups because it has no relevance to good relations.

Level of impact

None

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

Religious Belief

No – the policy bears no relevance to good relations.

Political Opinion

No – the policy bears no relevance to good relations.

Racial Group

No – the policy bears no relevance to good relations.

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

5. Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy or decision on people with multiple identities? (For example, disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men, and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

Yes.

Please specify the relevant Section 75 categories concerned below.
All.

Provide details of the policy impact and data which describes the policy impact.
This policy will have a positive impact on people with multiple identities. The policy aims to improve equality of opportunity by promoting cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice.

Disability Duties

6. Does the policy provide an opportunity to encourage disabled people to participate in PUBLIC life?

Yes

The policy sets out ways for stakeholders to support people with disabilities to fully participate in litigation as litigants in person.

7. Does the policy provide an opportunity to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

Yes. The policy aims to provide equality of opportunity for this category; it presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice. The Charter goes a significant way to challenge the stigma surrounding disabled litigants in person.

Part 3: Screening decision

Based on the evidence considered and outlined in Part 1 and the responses to the screening questions (Part 2), please indicate the screening decision for this policy.

Note: The University should take particular care not to screen out policies that have a procurement aspect if there is potential to promote equality of opportunity through the procurement of services.

- ☐ **Screen in** the policy (that is, subject to an Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **major** in respect of one, or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories.
- ☐ **Screen out** the policy without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted (that is, **no** Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **none** in respect of all of equality of opportunity or good relations categories.
- ☒ **Screen out** the policy and **mitigate the impacts on equality by amending or changing the policy**, or by **developing an alternative policy or action** (that is, **no** Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **minor** in respect of one or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen in' the policy), please provide details of the reasons.

Not applicable

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen out' the policy), please provide details for the reasons.

Not applicable

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen out' the policy), and mitigate the impacts on equality of opportunity by amending or changing the policy, or by developing an alternative policy or action, please provide reasons to support your decision, together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

The likely impact is **minor** in respect of one or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories, as follows:

- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunities for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity;
- e) Differential impact observed and opportunities exist to better promote equality of opportunity.

The aim of the policy is to provide equality of opportunity for all litigants; it presents ways to promote cordial, professional contact between solicitors and litigants in person in the interests of justice.

Subject to the feedback received during the consultation exercise, further amendments may be made to the policy to mitigate any unforeseen impacts on equality of opportunity.

In line with University policy, the final approved policy will be reviewed 2 years post-implementation.

Timetabling and prioritising

If the policy had been '**screened in**' for an equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of effect on equality of opportunity and good relations:

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of social need

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of effect on people's daily lives

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of relevance to the University's functions

Not applicable

Note: The Total Rating Score will be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the University in timetabling. Details of the University's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable will be included in its quarterly Screening Reports.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

Not applicable

Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Professor Liam Maguire



Position or Job Title: Pro Vice-Chancellor Research

Date screened: 26 August 2025

Approved by:



Position or Job Title: Chief People Officer

Date approved: 27 August 2025

Review

This policy is due for review (in terms of its impact on equality of opportunity and good relations) by the policy owner on: 27 August 2027