

Equality and Children’s Rights Impact Assessment (Stage 1)

This is a legal document as set out in the

- **Equality Act (2010), the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) regulations 2012,**
- **the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024,**

and may be used as evidence for cases referred for further investigation for compliance issues.

Completing this form helps you to decide whether or not to complete to a full (Stage 2) EQIA and/or Children’s Rights and Wellbeing impact Assessment (CRWIA). Consideration of the impacts using evidence, and public/patient feedback may also be necessary.

Question 1: Title of Policy, Strategy, Redesign or Plan

VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE POLICY

Question 2a: Lead Assessor’s details

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Question 2b: Is there a specific group dedicated to this work? If yes, what is the title of this group?

n/a

Question 3: Detail the main aim(s) of the Policy, Strategy, Redesign or Plan. Please describe the specific objectives and desired outcomes for this work.

Aim	<p>Voluntary severance is an arrangement where an employee agrees to leave their job by mutual consent, usually in return for a financial package. NHS Fife’s Voluntary Severance Policy sets out arrangements applicable to staff employed by NHS Fife if they meet the criteria to apply for voluntary severance.</p> <p>NHS Fife manages workforce changes through redeployment and natural</p>
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	<p>turnover, and where necessary displaced staff are supported through redeployment into new posts with relevant training and development.</p> <p>However, there are situations where redeployment may not be possible due to the particular skill set of the individual or where a reduction in staffing could assist service redesign and the achievement of financial savings plans. Likewise, when services are going through service change, which leads to displacement, staff may volunteer to leave based on receiving a financial settlement as an alternative to redeployment.</p> <p>All employees of NHS Fife who meet the qualifying criteria set out in the scheme could individually decide whether this is an opportunity they wish to apply for voluntarily. There is also the ability for a manager to explore this policy with staff who find themselves being redeployed or as part of the ending of a fixed term contract.</p>
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Question 4: Identifying the Impacts in brief

Consider any potential Impacts whether positive and/or negative including **social and economic impacts** and human rights. Please note, in brief, what these may be, if any. **Please do not leave any sections blank.**

Relevant Protected Characteristics	Impacts negative and positive Social / Economic Human Rights
<p>Age - <i>Think: adults, older age etc.</i></p> <p><i>For impacts on 0-18 year old, please refer to the below Question 5 - children's rights assessment (CRWIA).</i></p>	<p>The median age of the NHS Fife workforce was 45, with 26.1% aged 55 and over. The age associated with new starters is more concentrated between the ages of 25-39, with activity on promotions between the ages of 25-44.</p> <p>Voluntary severance can be particularly beneficial for older adults as it provides a financial package that in some cases can help bridge the gap to retirement. It offers an opportunity to leave work earlier without penalty, reduces stress associated with continued employment, and gives individuals the flexibility to focus on personal goals, family, or part-time work.</p> <p>That being said there are consequences of Voluntary Severance that can negatively impact older adults such as a reduction in long term income due to fewer pension contributions, a loss of employment related benefits such as sick pay and older adults may find it more difficult to re-enter employment.</p> <p>There is also the potential risk of age discrimination given</p>

	<p>that the financial package is based on length of service which could be more favourable to longer serving employees and therefore disadvantage younger employees. However this may be objectively justified on the following basis:</p> <p>It may be more likely, but not always the case that older applicants will have longer service than younger applicants. Seeking to provide a greater financial package to older employees may be legitimate on the basis, as highlighted above, that they may face greater challenges in finding alternative employment.</p>
<p>Disability – <i>Think: mental health, physical disability, learning disability, deaf, hard of hearing, sight loss etc.</i></p>	<p>29.11% of employees have provided details on their disability status, 42.56 indicated they prefer not to say, 3.28% of employees identified themselves as Disabled.</p> <p>Voluntary Severance applies equally to all employees who meet the criteria. Decision makers must ensure that an employee’s disability does not form part of the decision making process when agreeing or refusing an application and disabled employees should not be steered towards voluntary severance because of their disability as this would be considered discriminatory. Potential impacts on disabled employees includes:</p> <p>Disabled employees may feel pressured to volunteer if they perceive they are being treated as less capable. Disabled staff may miss out on alternative roles if reasonable adjustments are not fully considered. Processes that rely on written applications may disadvantage staff with specific impairments unless adjustments are offered. Disabled staff may not qualify for ill-Health retirement if taking voluntary Severance. To mitigate these issues ensure all communications are accessible; offer reasonable adjustments for meetings, forms and discussions; review refusal decisions for possible indirect discrimination. Consider ill-health retirement or redeployment separately and explain clearly to staff the implications of Voluntary Severance.</p>

<p>Race and Ethnicity – <i>Note: Race = “a category of humankind that shares certain distinctive physical traits” e.g. Black, Asian, White, Arab</i></p> <p><i>Ethnicity = “large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic or cultural origin/background”</i></p> <p><i>Think: White Gypsy Travellers, Black African, Asian Pakistani, White Romanian, Black Scottish, mixed or multiple ethnic groups.</i></p>	<p>68.70% of staff have provided details on their ethnicity, 16.02% have omitted the information, 14.99 indicated they prefer not to say. 54.66% of employees identified as White Scottish, 5.12% of employees identify as African, Asian, Caribbean, Black and Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups (including “Don’t Know”)</p> <p>Whilst voluntary severance is open to all staff that meet the criteria, care must be taken to ensure that any decision is not influenced either positively or negatively by race or ethnic background. Any action to approve or decline a voluntary severance request must be free from racial bias.</p> <p>Even when decisions are not intentionally discriminatory indirect discrimination can occur if the process disproportionately affects certain racial or ethnic groups. For example if voluntary severance is only available to certain departments or roles where particular ethnic groups are prevalent or if communication about voluntary severance is inaccessible for employees whose first language is not English. To mitigate these risks access to voluntary severance needs to be applied equally and decisions monitored.</p> <p>A fair and transparent Voluntary Severance process can improve confidence and trust among race minority groups by demonstrating equality of access.</p>
<p>Sex – <i>Think: male and/or female, intersex, Gender-Based Violence</i></p>	<p>84.57% of staff identifies themselves as female. 15.41% of staff identifies themselves as male.</p> <p>Risk of discrimination if voluntary severance is approved or refused on the basis of sex, to mitigate this clear, objective and neutral criteria as detailed in the policy must be applied. Decisions should be documented clearly and monitored for any gender based bias.</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation - <i>Think: lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, etc.</i></p>	<p>54.27% of staff have provided details on their Sexual Orientation, 51.95% of employees identified themselves as Heterosexual.</p> <p>2.33% of the workforce identified themselves as Bisexual (1.02%), Gay / Lesbian (1.07%) or other (0.24%).</p> <p>45.73% have either confirmed they don’t know (0.17%), have omitted the information (16.53%), or indicated they prefer not to say (29.02%).</p> <p>Risk of discrimination if voluntary severance is approved or refused on the basis of sexual Orientation, to mitigate this clear, objective and neutral criteria as detailed in the policy</p>

	<p>must be applied. Decisions should be documented clearly and monitored for any sexual orientation based bias.</p> <p>A fair and transparent Voluntary Severance process can improve confidence and trust among minority groups by demonstrating equality of access.</p>
<p>Religion and Belief - <i>Note: Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief including a lack of belief.</i></p> <p><i>Think: Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Atheist, etc.</i></p>	<p>64.7% of staff have provided details on their Religion or Belief, 36.54% of employees identified as holding no religion and / or belief, 28.16% of the workforce indentified as holding a religion and / or belief. 35.3% have either confirmed they don't know (0.18%), have omitted the information (16.98%), or indicated they prefer not to say (18.15%).</p> <p>Risk of discrimination if voluntary severance is approved or refused on the basis of religious belief, to mitigate this clear, objective and neutral criteria as detailed in the policy must be applied. Decisions should be documented clearly and monitored for any sexual orientation based bias.</p> <p>A fair and transparent Voluntary Severance process can improve confidence and trust among religious minority groups by demonstrating equality of access.</p>
<p>Gender Reassignment – <i>Note: transitioning pre and post transition regardless of Gender Recognition Certificate</i></p> <p><i>Think: transgender, gender fluid, nonbinary, etc.</i></p>	<p>35.02% of employees have provided details on their Gender Reassignment status, 31.24% have omitted the information, 36.1% or indicated they prefer not to say. The number of employees who have responded Yes to this Protected Characteristic shows a headcount of <5.</p> <p>Risk of discrimination if voluntary severance is approved or refused on the basis of gender reassignment, to mitigate this clear, objective and neutral criteria as detailed in the policy must be applied. Decisions should be documented clearly and monitored for any sexual orientation based bias.</p> <p>A fair and transparent Voluntary Severance process can improve confidence and trust among minority groups by demonstrating equality of access.</p>
<p>Pregnancy and Maternity – <i>Note: Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after birth.</i></p> <p><i>Think: workforce maternity leave, public breast feeding, etc.</i></p>	<p>Pregnant employees and those on maternity leave have enhanced protection and priority consideration for suitable alternative roles where necessary.</p> <p>Although pregnant employees and those on maternity leave are eligible to apply for voluntary severance, careful consideration is required regarding the consequences of leaving employment. Accepting voluntary severance would end the employment relationship, resulting in the loss of Occupational Maternity Pay, which is only payable while the employee remains in post, financial implications needs to be</p>

	made clear before an application is made.
<p>Marriage and Civil Partnership</p> <p>–</p> <p><i>Note: Marriage is the union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as a civil partnership.</i></p> <p><i>Think: workforce, inpatients visiting rights, etc.</i></p>	<p>53.06% of staff identified have responded that they are Married or in a Civil Partnership, 41.29% of employees identified themselves as Single, The remaining workforce have identified themselves as being Divorced / Dissolved Civil Partnership, or Widowed.</p> <p>Risk of discrimination if voluntary severance is approved or refused on the basis of marriage or civil partnership, to mitigate this clear, objective and neutral criteria as detailed in the policy must be applied. Even when decisions are not intentionally biased processes can inadvertently disadvantage certain groups, care must be taken to ensure that assumptions regarding financial status, work patterns or caring responsibilities should not impact voluntary severance decisions. Decisions should be documented clearly and monitored for any bias.</p>

Question 5: Children’s Rights & Wellbeing Impact Assessment

From July 2024, the UNCRC is enforceable by law. This means public bodies must act compatibly with children’s rights. Please consider here any impacts of your proposal on children’s rights as per the [UNCRC](#) articles. The UNCRC applies to all under 18s, with no exceptions.

Even if your proposal does not directly impact children, there may be indirect impact, so please work through the below regardless.

UNCRC Right	Anticipated Impacts & Relevant Mitigations
<p>Article 3 - Best Interests of the Child</p> <p><i>Note: Consideration to how any proposal may impact children must be made. Decisions must be made whilst considering what is best for children.</i></p>	<p>Accepting a voluntary severance package can have indirect but significant effects on children within the household. These may include a reduction in overall family income, particularly where changes to benefits such as Universal Credit occur. There may also be implications for child maintenance arrangements in separated families if a parent’s income reduces or if deductions are applied through universal credit mechanisms. Children’s wellbeing can be affected by parental employment instability and any financial pressures that arise if alternative employment is not secured.</p>

	<p>However, there can also be positive outcomes, such as increased parental availability and reduced work-related pressures, which may enhance family relationships and allow for greater parental engagement with children.</p>
<p>Article 6 & 19- Life, Survival and Development & Protection <i>Think: Children have the right to life. Governments should make sure that children develop and grow healthily and should protect them from things or people which could hurt them.</i></p>	<p>There are no adverse impacts from this policy identified</p>
<p>Article 12 & 13 – Respect for Children’s Views and Access to Information <i>Note: every child has the right to have a say in decisions that affect them this could include making a complaint and accessing information.</i></p>	<p>There are no adverse impacts from this policy identified</p>
<p>Article 22 & 30 – Refugee &/or Care Experienced Children <i>Note: If a child comes to live in the UK from another country as a refugee, they should have the same rights as children born in the UK. Some children may need additional considerations to make any proposal equitable for them (e.g. The Promise, Language interpretation or cultural differences).</i></p>	<p>There are no adverse impacts from this policy identified</p>
<p>Article 23 – Disabled Children <i>Note: Disabled children should be supported in being an active participant in their communities.</i> <i>Think: Can disabled children join in with activities without their disability stopping them from taking part?</i></p>	<p>Voluntary severance may have indirect but significant implications for disabled children within the household. A reduction in earned income, combined with changes to means-tested benefits such as Universal Credit, may affect the financial resources available to meet the child’s additional needs. Impacts on benefit entitlement may reduce the financial support available to disabled children, including the child elements payable to households with dependants.</p> <p>For separated families, changes in parental income can also affect child maintenance arrangements, which may be particularly important where a disabled child requires higher levels of care and associated costs.</p> <p>Disabled children, who may already face additional social and developmental challenges, may be especially vulnerable to the effects of prolonged parental <i>unemployment following</i></p>

	<p><i>voluntary severance.</i></p> <p>However, there can also be positive outcomes, such as increased parental availability and reduced work-related pressures, which may enhance family relationships and allow for greater parental engagement with children which may be particularly affected.</p>
<p>Article 24 & 27 – Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Health <i>Note: Children should have access to good quality health care and environments that enable them to stay healthy both physically and mentally.</i></p> <p><i>Think: Clean environments, nutritious foods, safe working environments.</i></p>	<p>There are no adverse impacts from this policy identified</p>
<p>Other relevant UNCRC articles: <i>Note: Please list any other UNCRC articles that are specifically relevant to your proposal.</i></p>	<p>There are no other relevant UNCRC articles.</p>

Question 6: Please include in brief any evidence or relevant information, local or national that has influenced the decisions being made. This could include demographic profiles, audits, publications, and health needs assessments.

Data taken from NHS Fife's Workforce Overview and Equality and Diversity Monitoring Report highlights that there was a 0.7% decrease in the size of the NHS Fife workforce (1.4% decrease when measured as whole time equivalent) in the year to 31st March 2025, indicating that the expansion in the workforce since 2019, replicated throughout Scotland, is plateauing and showing signs of reversing. This reduction was most evident in non-clinical job families which showed a reduction of 3.0% (headcount), versus a 0.1% increase within clinical job families.

In developing and applying NHS Fife's Voluntary Severance policy the Board will ensure full alignment with the principles set out in DL(2019)15. Voluntary Severance is recognised as an essential tool that enables organisations to deliver value for money through reshaping services, managing their workforce and reacting to changing organisational circumstances, while at the same time helping leavers to bridge the gap into new employment or retirement.

Key factors included:

- £95,000 severance payment cap and recovery arrangements for voluntary early severance,
- Set a consistent maximum pay-back period of two years for voluntary early severance and retirement schemes;
- Set a maximum notice period of six months' in new contracts and reduce the use of discretionary payments; and
- Introduce measures to improve governance, accountability and transparency of severance payments.
- Compensation should only be offered on a value for money basis for example restructuring and post(s) no longer available or the individual/s particular skill sets or

location means that redeployment would be problematic.

- They should not be used to deal with poor performance or attendance as NHS Employers will have separate policies to deal with these situations.

All severance decisions will be governed by robust scrutiny, transparent documentation, and adherence to national standards to ensure fairness, consistency, and public accountability.

Question 7: Have you consulted with staff, public, service users, children and young people and others to help assess for Impacts?

(Please tick)

Yes	Y	No	
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If yes, **who** was involved and **how** were they involved?

If not, why did you not consult other staff, patients or service users? Do you have feedback, comments/complaints etc that you are using to learn from, what are these and what do they tell you?

Policy was developed jointly in partnership with our staffside colleagues. The policy was approved by our HR Policy Group and formally ratified at the Area Partnership Forum.

Question 10: Which of the following ‘Conclusion Options’ applies to the results of this Stage 1 EQIA and why? Please detail how and in what way each of the following options applies to your Plan, Strategy, Project, Redesign etc.

Note: This question informs your decision whether a Stage 2 EQIA is necessary or not.

Conclusion Option	Comments
<p>1. No Further Action Required. Impacts may have been identified, but mitigations have been established therefore no requirement for Stage 2 EQIA or a full Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment. (CRWIA)</p>	Mitigations for any anticipated negative impacts have been outlined above. There is no requirement for Stage 2 EQIA.
<p>2. Requires Further Adjustments. Potential or actual impacts have been identified; further consideration into mitigations must be made therefore Stage 2 EQIA or full CRWIA required.</p>	
<p>3. Continue Without Adjustments Negative impacts identified but no feasible mitigations. Decision to continue with proposal without adjustments can be objectively justified. Stage 2 EQIA /full CRWIA) may be required.</p>	
<p>4. Stop the Proposal Significant adverse impacts have been identified. Proposal must stop pending completion of a Stage 2 EQIA or full CRWIA</p>	

to fully explore necessary adjustments.


PLEASE NOTE: ALL LARGE SCALE DEVELOPMENTS, CHANGES, PLANS, POLICIES, BUILDINGS ETC MUST HAVE A STAGE 2 EQIA /full CRWIA)


If you have identified that a full EQIA/CRWIA is required then you will need to ensure that you have in place, a working group/ steering group/ oversight group and a means to reasonably address the results of the Stage 1 EQIA/CRWIA and any potential adverse outcomes at your meetings.

For example you can conduct stage 2 and then embed actions into task logs, action plans of sub-groups and identify lead people to take these as actions.

It is a requirement for Stage 2 EQIA's to involve public engagement and participation.

You should make contact with the Participation and Engagement team at fife.participationandengagements@nhs.scot to request community and public representation, and then contact Health Improvement Scotland to discuss further support for participation and engagement.

To be completed by Lead Assessor	
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Telephone (ext)	
Signature	
Date	02/02/2026

To be completed by Equality and Human Rights Lead officer – for quality control purposes	
Name	Isla Bumba
Email	Fife.equalityandhumanrights@nhs.scot
Telephone (ext)	
Signature	
Date	30/3/26

Return to Equality and Human Rights Team at
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