

BUDGET

Key points

- In the preparation of budget proposals, Departments and other public authorities should ensure that they fulfil their statutory equality and good relations duties.
- The Commission has set out in guidance how Section 75 duties and equality scheme commitments apply to the budget processes. Equality scheme arrangements and tools - i.e. screening and equality impact assessment (EQIA) - provide a means for Departments and other public authorities to assess the likely impacts of the budget proposals.

Applying equality scheme arrangements for assessments to the full range of decisions will ensure transparent and evidence-based decisions.

[ECNI Section 75 and Budgets: a short guide 2015](#)

Equality/ good relations requirements

Meeting equality and good relations requirements in developing and delivering the PfG and Budget requires leadership and commitment at the highest levels and throughout public policy making.

We have set out in [guidance](#)⁸ (2015) how Section 75 duties and equality scheme commitments apply to the budget processes. As highlighted in this guidance, in the preparation of budget proposals, Departments and other public authorities should ensure that they fulfil their statutory equality and good relations duties.

Through its functions, the Department of Finance, must comply with the statutory equality duties, and apply its equality scheme arrangements. In addition, Departments and other public authorities have functional responsibility not only for contributing to the preparation of budget proposals, but also the allocation of individual budget settlements. Similarly, they must fulfil these functions and make decisions having given the required consideration under the statutory equality duties.

8 Equality Commission (2015) [Section 75 and Budgets: a short guide](#),

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Through application of their equality scheme arrangements, specifically through the methodologies for assessing the likely impacts of the budget proposals (ie through the tools of screening and equality impact assessment (EQIA)), Departments and other public bodies will be able to fulfil their statutory equality duties.

Further, both screening and EQIA methodologies prompt for the identification of mitigation and alternative policies. In circumstances of budget reductions, measures to mitigate adverse impacts and alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality will be important for consideration.

Decisions to change, reduce or withdraw services, particularly in times of budget reduction, whether on a temporary, interim or pilot basis, should be treated as “policies” for the purposes of equality scheme commitments.

We recommend that early options are presented with screening or that options appraisal has incorporated screening. We also recommend that Departments and other public bodies embed equality of opportunity and good relations in their procurement practices.

As highlighted in good practice [guidance](#)⁹, equality of opportunity must be considered at the outset of any procurement process and then throughout the life of the project, with particular attention being given to decision-making moments.

“...it is vital that all levels of government adopt an equality responsive approach to budgeting making as a means of fulfilling Section 75 duties.”

Expert paper: Quinn S, [Equality Responsive Budgeting 2013](#)

9 Equality Commission, DFP (2008) [Equality of Opportunity and Sustainable Development in Public Sector Procurement.](#)

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