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| Title: | Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Policy | | |
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| Ownership: | Dr Nigel Ruddell, Medical Director | | |
| Date of SMT Approval: | 14 th June 2022 | Date of ARAC Approval: | 23 rd June 2022 |
| Operational Date: | 23 rd June 2022 | Review Date: | June 2025 |
| Version No: | 1.0 | Supercedes: | N/A |
| Key Words: | Health surveillance, risk assessment, ill health, infection, dermatitis, skin, noise, stress, mental wellbeing, night workers, fatigue, shift working, hazardous substances, occupational health, CoSHH, RIDDOR. | | |
| Links to Other Policies / Procedures: | Health and Safety Policy and Procedures, Information Governance Policies and Procedures, Incident Reporting Procedure, RIDDOR, Assurance Framework, Wellbeing Strategy (pending) | | |

| Version Control: | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Date: | Version: | Author: | Comments: |
| June 2022 | 1.0 | Fire & Security Advisor | New Policy |
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1.0 INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Background:

There is a statutory requirement on the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) under the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations (NI) 1993 to supply Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) wherever there are risks to health and safety that cannot be adequately controlled in other ways.

PPE must be considered in *addition* to all other control measures and should not be relied on as the only means of protection. PPE is defined as 'all equipment (including clothing affording protection against the weather) which is intended to be worn or held by a person at work and which protects individuals against one or more risks to their health or safety.

1.2 Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to set out the requirements for the selection, use and maintenance of PPE in NIAS. It provides information and advice on the different types of PPE available. It also clarifies roles and responsibilities and the applicable legislation on the supply and use of PPE in NIAS.

1.3 Objectives:

This Policy sets out the requirements for the correct selection, fitment and use of PPE. This policy seeks to:

- Ensure staff are protected by assessing the risks from processes and practices and applying the necessary control measures, so far as reasonably practicable.
- Ensure suitable and sufficient risk assessments are completed for all tasks carried out by NIAS staff.
- Set out clear roles and responsibilities associated with statutory legislation.
- Ensure staff are trained in the safe fitment and use of PPE issued.
- Ensure adherence to applicable health and safety legislation.
- Clarify arrangements for reporting of issues associated with PPE.
- Outline the process for audit and review to ensure the effective use of PPE.

2.0 SCOPE:

The policy applies to all staff employed by NIAS including bank / agency etc. Outside of scope is the provision and use of PPE for scenarios involving lead, ionising radiation, asbestos, vibration and noise along with some matters covered by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (NI) 2003 (as amended). The primary objective of this policy is to ensure that the legal requirements in the provision of PPE are outlined in more general terms.

3.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

3.1 The Chief Executive is responsible for:

- Ensuring that there are suitable and sufficient arrangements in place with regards to the adequate resourcing of all matters pertaining to PPE.
- Ensuring the full and effective implementation of this Policy, and satisfying Trust Board of the same.
- Ensuring there are suitable arrangements in place for the review and audit of this policy document to ensure that the policy remains fit for purpose and that full policy compliance is achieved.

3.2 The Director of Finance is responsible for:

- Ensuring that there are suitable and sufficient arrangements in place with regards to the procurement of PPE.
- Ensuring a competent person/s are in position to procure PPE as appropriate to NIAS requirements.
- Ensure that any PPE purchased complies with the relevant legislation and standards.

3.3 Directors & Assistant Directors are responsible for:

- Implementing this Policy and any associated guidance based on risk assessment within their areas of responsibility.
- Ensuring arrangements are in place for monitoring and compliance with this Policy.
- Ensuring that there are suitable resources available for the implementation of this Policy.
- Informing the Risk Management Team where there is a significant change in substances, processes or practices.
- Ensuring line managers and supervisors have sufficient training and instruction to be competent in carrying out audits and PPE checks.
- Ensuring the provision of any personal protective equipment needed for the job, free of charge, to any employees who may be exposed to risks to their safety, where such risks have not been adequately controlled by other equally or more effective means.
- Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain personal protective equipment in a clean state and in good working order prior to issue. Ensure there is a means of checking it before issue to employees.
- Ensuring that the number of different types of PPE used is minimised, to prevent compatibility issues, or mistakes with servicing or replacement.
- Ensuring that any staff using PPE are trained in its safe use and correct fitment.

3.4 The Risk Management Team is responsible for:

- The development of suitable policies, procedures and arrangements to ensure that risks to staff health from work related activities are reduced so far as is reasonably practicable.
- Providing specialist advice and guidance to the Trust.
- Providing advice to managers on completion of risk assessments to identify any potential health risks and identify additional control measure required.
- Assist managers in the selection of appropriate PPE.

- Ensure adequate health & safety training is provided for staff and line management in order to facilitate them being able to carry out appropriate risk assessments.
- Liaising with other specialists, i.e. infection prevention and control staff, clinical leads and procurement staff to ensure that products are carefully evaluated before being introduced.
- Supporting line management and liaising with other specialists to reduce compatibility issues.
- Reporting to the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NI) 1997.
- Providing a point of contact between NIAS and external parties such as HSENI.
- Ensure suitable specialist training is arranged for the use of any Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE).

3.5 The Regional Ambulance Clinical Training Centre (RACTC) are responsible for:

Providing adequate information, instruction and training to all new staff and existing staff to enable employees to use personal protective equipment correctly in relation to operational duties. This should include:

- The proper use of the PPE.
- How to correctly fit and wear it.
- What its limitations are.

Training should include theory and practice and should involve the manufacturer's recommendations and instructions (with documents / support from the Risk Management Team as necessary). The extent of training depends on the complexity of the equipment and the risks involved. Training may include, but not limited to:

- An explanation of the risks present and why PPE is needed.
- The operation, performance and limitations of the equipment.
- Instructions on the selection, use and storage of PPE related to the intended use. Written operating procedures such as permits to work involving PPE should be explained.
- Factors which can affect the protection provided by the PPE such as other protective equipment, personal factors, working conditions, inadequate fitting and defects, damage and wear.
- Recognising defects in PPE and arrangements for reporting loss or defects.
- Practice in putting on, wearing and removing the equipment.
- Practice and instruction in inspection and, where appropriate, testing of PPE before use.
- Practice and instruction in the maintenance which can be done by the user such as cleaning and the replacement of certain components.
- Instruction in the safe storage of equipment.

Should it become apparent during RACTC operations, that equipment may not continue to be effective against the risks in questions (compatibility issues), this must be immediately escalated to senior management. Support can be provided by the Risk Management Team as necessary.

3.6 The Emergency Planning Team are responsible for:

- Providing adequate information, instruction and training to enable employees to use personal protective equipment correctly in relation to Emergency Planning Tasks / Operations. This includes all equipment under the control and direction of the Team, for example equipment for working at height, respirator hoods, breathing apparatus chemical protective suits etc. This should include an explanation of the risks, why the equipment/clothing is needed, how and when it should be used/worn.
- Flagging up any compatibility issues to the Risk Management Team.

3.7 The Infection, Prevention & Control Team are responsible for:

- Providing adequate information, instruction and training to enable employees to use personal protective equipment correctly in relation to IPC PPE. This should include an explanation of the risks, why the equipment/clothing is needed, how and when it should be used/worn.
- Flagging up any compatibility issues to the Risk Management Team.
- Inspect and audit IPC related PPE on a regular basis, recording the findings.

3.8 Line Managers are responsible for:

- Being aware of all hazards and processes within their control/division.
- Risk assessing the workplace, identifying hazards and implementing adequate controls measures. This process should be carried out with the assistance of the Risk Management Team.
- Ensure that areas where gloves are used/required that all staff are aware of Trust arrangements for glove use and disposal.
- Ensure staff are aware of Trust Skin Care Policy.
- Provide staff with instruction/training on how to fit, use, inspect and store the PPE correctly.
- Provide storage facilities for personal protective equipment when not in use as applicable.
- Where appropriate, ensure adequate stock of PPE is maintained, and that any identified PPE is readily available to employees, or at the very least the employee must have information on where they can obtain it.
- As far as is reasonably practicable under current operational arrangements, supervise employees to ensure that they wear the personal protective equipment correctly and whenever it is needed.
- Ensure that any personal protective equipment provided is maintained (including replacement or cleaning as appropriate) in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair. Where applicable, spare parts should be available to users, manufacturer's instructions and guidelines should be followed, and any intricate repairs should be carried out by a specialised person.
- Where appropriate ensure signage is displayed in areas that require PPE.
- Monitor the PPE being used and ensure it being used correctly. In the event of regular non-compliance / misuse, line managers must take the appropriate action.

Any issues beyond the control of the line manager should be escalated to a more senior manager.

3.9 All Staff are responsible for:

- Adherence to this Policy and overarching arrangements.
- Attend any training sessions for use of PPE (fit testing for RPE etc.).
- Inspect, wear and use the issued PPE correctly.
- Carry, store and clean/maintain the PPE issued correctly.
- Report any defects or faults with the PPE immediately to their line manager.
- Not misuse or abuse any item of PPE either issued personally to themselves or issued to others. Any act of PPE misuse or disruption to any items of PPE, either personal or others will result in an investigation under the Trusts disciplinary procedures.
- Ensuring that other clothing, such as cardigans, pullovers or coats are never worn over protective clothing. In cold weather, additional clothing should always be worn under protective clothing.
- Co-operate with any control measures implemented to protect their health.
- Attend Occupational Health appointments as requested.
- Report any adverse reactions when using PPE such as sensitivity to materials to line management.
- Report any PPE failures.
- Ensuring that footwear complies with Trust specification and any health related concerns are raised via Occupational Health.
- Ensuring that items provided for safety reasons such as PPE are not altered in any way (holes, stickers etc.). High visibility clothing must not be altered in any way.
- Seek replacement items when disposable PPE has been used.
- Seek replacement items when PPE has come to end of life (manufacturer's guidelines etc.).
- Complying with any procedures, information, instruction or training deemed necessary by NIAS for the health and safety of employees, visitors and members of the public.

3.10 The Health & Safety Committee is responsible for:

- Oversight of incidents and issues pertaining to use of PPE within NIAS.
- The formulation of any remedial measures that may be required and to assist with the aim of seeking continual improvement in the use and procurement of PPE.
- Assessing any training requirements associated with the issuing and fitting of PPE.
- Monitoring, measuring, review and audit measures that may be required to ensure the issued PPE is adequate and fit for purpose.

4.0 KEY PRINCIPLES:

4.1 What types of PPE are available?

PPE should be regarded as a "last line of defence" after all other control measures have been implemented following the risk assessment of the task or activity. PPE should not be relied upon as the sole means of protection

PPE includes the following when worn for the protection of a person's health and safety

- a) Protective clothing:

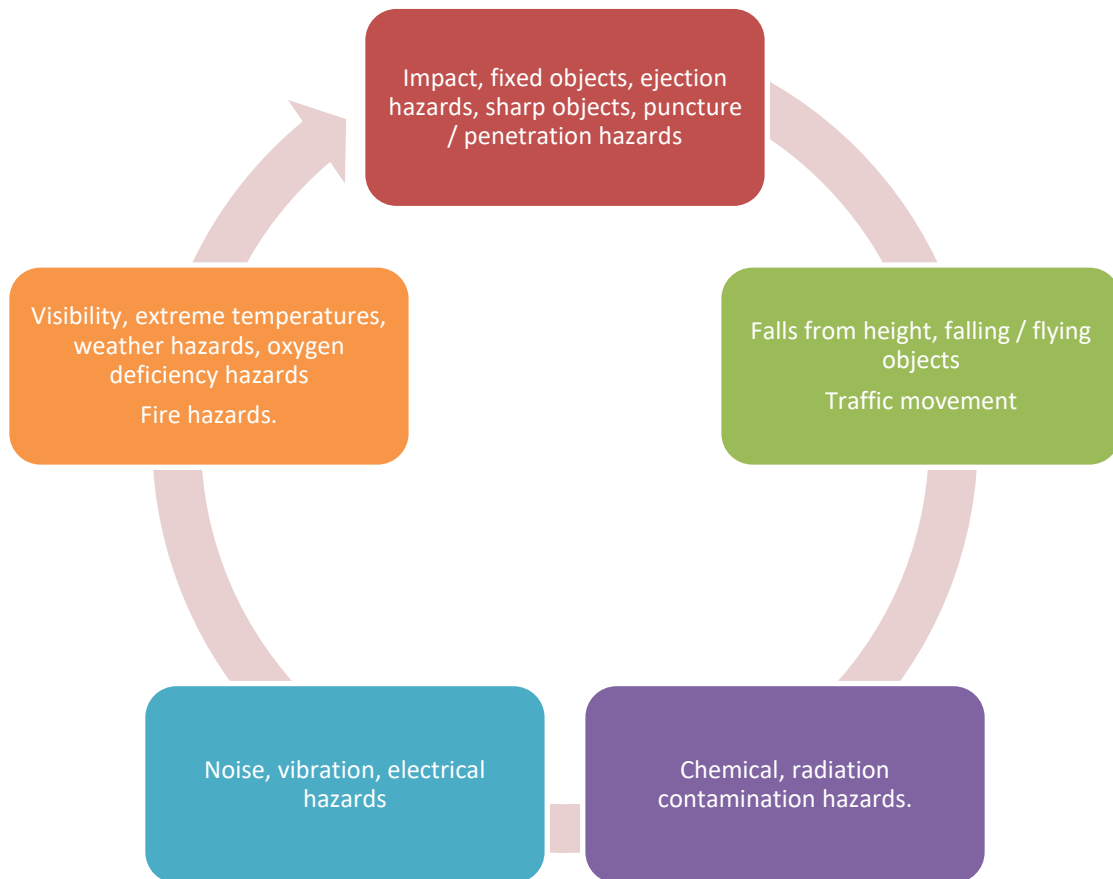
- Gloves.
- Aprons.
- Safety footwear.
- Safety helmets/caps.
- High visibility clothing.
- Adverse weather e.g. coats/jacket/waterproofs etc.

b) Protective equipment:

- Eye protection – safety glasses/goggles or full face shields.
- Respiratory protective equipment (RPE) – this can be a simple dust mask to fully sealed breathing apparatus.
- Head protection.
- Hand protection.
- Hearing protection – ear defenders and ear plugs.
- Full body safety harness.

Note that this list is not exhaustive; risks will be continually assessed as appropriate.

Figure 1: Workplace Hazards:

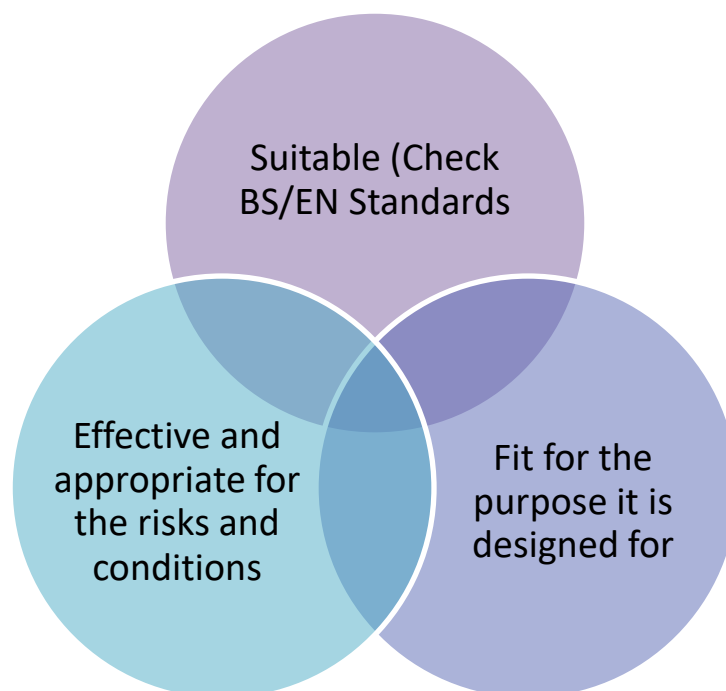


4.2 PPE Selection:

If the risk assessment identifies that a process or task cannot be controlled through the current measures in place, then PPE should be used. It must be suitable and sufficient for the work process and the individual/s involved (dynamic risk assessment process in place and followed as necessary). Making an assessment of what PPE is required should take several factors into account, such as:

- The task that is to be carried out – is the duration of the task going to determine what level of PPE is required? Is the physical element of the task going to influence the type of PPE?
- The hazard it is intended to protect against.
- The individual/s carrying out the work – size, fitment, comfort.
- Does the PPE conform to current standards?
- Does the health of the individual/s have to be taken into consideration such as those with asthma, allergies, and people with limited mobility or additional needs?
- Does the PPE create additional hazards if worn, such as communication or sensitivity to the material used to manufacture the PPE?
- All PPE must conform to current approved conformity standards (changes pending at the time of writing). Risk Management Team should be contacted for advice on validity for CE Marking, current standards etc.
- It is important that when assessing what PPE is required that the risk assessment specifies standards e.g. Eye protection EN166 grade B and not just “Eye protection”.

Figure 2: PPE Selection:



4.3 PPE Limitations:

- Maintenance of PPE is critical in ensuring that it remains fit for purpose and can protect the user from the hazard it was designed to do.
- As PPE is a last line of defence, it only protects the user. If the hazard is controlled at source, then everyone is protected.
- Possibility of restricting the user's mobility or visibility or carrying additional weight.
- Some PPE items have limited life spans and this should be a consideration when stock piling. An audit of such items should be taken at regular intervals and a record of dates and items stored centrally. This information can be obtained from the manufacturers or the packaging itself.
- Staff can occasionally be sensitive to materials used in manufacturing process.
- Some items can cause skin sensitivity if worn for long durations, such as gloves and face masks. See Trust Skin Care Policy for further information.
- Excessive volumes of single use PPE can be detrimental to the environment due to build-up of waste products such as disposable gloves, aprons and face masks.
- To be fully effective requires the user to ensure it is being used/fitted correctly at all times.
- Staff can become complacent if they are not regularly supervised ('it will only take me a minute' ethos).

4.4 Storage of PPE:

- As per the PPE at work regulations (NI) 1993, "***Where an employer or self-employed person is required, by virtue of regulation 4, to ensure that personal protective equipment is provided, he shall also ensure that appropriate accommodation is provided for that personal protective equipment when it is not being used***"
- PPE must be stored in a clean and dry environment that will not cause any detrimental effects to it.
- PPE must be kept secure where possible and / or stored in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- PPE items should be stored away from direct sunlight and hazardous atmospheres.
- Dirty/reusable PPE should be stored away/separate from unused items and labelled appropriately until cleaned / returned to service.

4.5 Training:

- Training on the fitting, use, inspection and storage must be provided to all staff who require PPE as part of their work. Records of this training must be kept centrally for audit and traceability purpose.
- All staff are required to attend PPE training sessions as required as this is deemed mandatory training.
- Areas of specialism such as fit testing, working at height, chemical handling etc. should be carried out by an external competent provider or by a verified internal trainer.

4.6. Hi-visibility Clothing:

- Hi-visibility clothing must be worn by all operational staff when working in dark/cold or inclement weather, (an exemption from this would be such as HART team working in all terrains and requiring the wearing of specialist clothing) when working anywhere near

water and on all open roads where vehicle movement is expected (this includes the movement of emergency service vehicles). It must also be worn in higher risk environments such as near railway lines, industrial complexes, construction sites, large events etc. This list is not exhaustive and dynamic risk assessments must be undertaken as necessary.

- High visibility items should be washed in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. Staff must request replacements for any high visibility items when the reflective/visibility of the item is compromised (faded).

4.7 Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE):

- Respiratory protective equipment (RPE) must be worn when there is a risk of harmful substances entering the body (airborne).
- Fit testing for FFP3 masks will take place as per NIAS IPC Policy and Procedures (fit testing is required to ensure adequate protection for individual wearers of RPE). Facial hair interferes with the effectiveness of masks/respiratory protective equipment (RPE) and therefore the protection offered.
- You must take all appropriate measures to ensure the secure and successful completion of fit testing to face masks. This includes removal of any facial hair or heavy make-up that affects the seal of the mask for (1) when you attend to have a fit test and (2) for every time you may be required to wear a mask. If you believe this presents any difficulty for you, based on religious or cultural factors, you should make immediate contact with your line manager. Consideration of possible alternatives will be given, on a case-by-case basis, which may include the use of a hood.

NIAS will fully assist any staff with individual needs, e.g. facial hair in keeping with religious beliefs. Staff should contact line management/Risk Manager for guidance if necessary.

4.8 Head Protection:

- Head protection / safety helmets must be worn in higher risk environments and where there is a risk of injury for example from falling or flying objects, or projectiles. Examples of higher risk environments include railway incidents, fire calls, motorways/major roads, road traffic incidents, major incidents, chemical incidents, HEMS involvement etc. (this list is not exhaustive and dynamic risk assessments must be undertaken as necessary). Safety helmets must be worn if directed by officers in charge of scene safety and/or as directed by other organisations with a view to reducing risk to staff, for example NIFRS and PSNI.
- NIAS will fully assist any staff with individual needs, e.g. headwear in keeping with religious beliefs. Staff should contact line management/Risk Manager for guidance if necessary.

4.9 Foot Protection:

- Foot protection must be worn at all times by operational staff when on duty. Reinforced toe protection shoes/boots meeting specifications for composite toe protection and sole protection compliant with EN20345:2011 and slip protection complying with EN13287 are provided and must be worn when on operational duties. .
- Wearing of personal footwear by operational staff is only acceptable, following a formal request to line management and confirmation of complete compliance with the above standards. An individual risk assessment is required.
- Only on referral from occupational health may an alternative type of footwear be considered to ensure the Trust is meeting its obligations in regards to provision of PPE to employees, so far as reasonably practicable.

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY:

5.1 Dissemination:

With regards to dissemination this procedure will be:

- Issued to all Board Members, Chair, Non-Executive Directors, Chief Executive, Directors and Assistant Directors.
- Disseminated to the required staff by Assistant Directors.
- Made available on the Internet and SharePoint so that all employees and members of the public/stakeholders can easily have access.
- Discussed during Corporate Induction.

5.2 Resources:

- Information contained within this policy will be made available to new employees at the commencement of employment, at employee induction programmes, and via information leaflets.
- Health and safety information is available on SharePoint.
- For existing employees, information and training will be available through clinical updates, Health & Safety Training sessions, Risk Assessment Training sessions and statutory / mandatory training in accordance with Trust Policies.
- Line managers will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the Trust / organization training matrix.

5.3 Exceptions:

- There are no staff exempt from the operation of this policy. NIAS will fully assist any staff with individual religious requirements, i.e. hijab and the Sikh turban. Staff should contact line management/Risk Manager for guidance if necessary.

6.0 MONITORING:

- It is the responsibility of the Health and Safety Committee to monitor the implementation of and assess the level of compliance with this procedure. Local monitoring in the use of PPE is the responsibility of all line managers, the IPC Team will inspect and audit IPC related PPE on a regular basis and the Risk Management Team will inspect and report on health and safety matters. Associated action plans are in place.

7.0 EVIDENCE BASE/REFERENCES:

There is a statutory requirement to procure, supply and use PPE under a number of pieces of legislation including the following:

- The Health & Safety at Work Order (NI) 1978.
- The Personal Protective Equipment at work Regulations (NI) 1993
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000.
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (NI) 2003.

8.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS:

This procedure has been developed by the Risk Management Team. Consultation took place with Human Resources, Occupational Health, Trade Unions, Senior Managers, Assistant Directors and Directors within the organisation. The final content of the document was agreed by the Health and Safety Committee, before SMT & ARAC approval on recommendation by SMT and Health and Safety Committee.

9.0 APPENDICES:

N/A.

10.0 EQUALITY STATEMENT:

10.1 In line with duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; Targeting Social Need Initiative; Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Human Rights Act 1998, an initial screening exercise, to ascertain if this policy should be subject to a full impact assessment, has been carried out.

10.2 The outcome of the equality screening for this procedure undertaken on 1st June 2022 is:

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Major impact | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Minor impact | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No impact. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

11.0 SIGNATORIES:

Sheridan Easter

Sheridan Easter
Lead Author

Date: 23rd June 2022

Nigel J. Ruddell

Dr Nigel Ruddell
Lead Director

Date: 23rd June 2022