

# Equality Impact Assessment

## Action Plan

This section is completed at the end of the Equality Impact Assessment. Due to the importance of embedding equality in SQA through our actions the Action Plan will be the focus and record of ongoing actions.

<b>Agreed Schedule Review Date</b>	April 2026	<b>Additional Schedule Review Date</b>	
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Explain how you will monitor and record the actual impact on equality groups, including how the evidence can be revisited to measure the actual impact.

<b>Required Actions</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment &amp; Review</b>
Actions taken to monitor the implementation of policy and the impact on equality groups (evidence and consultation)	Compliance Manager – Risk & Business Continuity	April 2026	Monitor incidents and gather data on any equalities impacts not already captured by the Incident Management Team (if relevant)
The Business Continuity Management (BCM) team will signpost to existing Equality Impact resources available to the Business Continuity Coordinator group for consideration when preparing for and during incidents	Compliance Manager – Risk & Business Continuity	September 2024	Include at the next BC Coordinator Forum. Lessons learned regarding EDI impacts will be communicated for information/action.

<b>Identified Actions</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment &amp; Review</b>
No actions identified				

## Policy Aims

<b>Name of Policy or practice</b>	Business Continuity Policy
<b>New Policy or Revision</b>	Revision
<b>Name of Policy Owner</b>	Head of Service – Strategic Planning & Governance
<b>Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion</b>	May 2024

### **What is the rationale for this policy or practice?**

SQA's Business Continuity Management System provides us with a framework that builds resilience through identifying and mitigating threats which have the potential to disrupt our business, whilst increasing our capability and effectiveness to respond to an incident. It links closely to SQA's wider risk management framework, to anticipate internal and external planned or unexpected events that may have potential to disrupt SQA.

### **What evidence is there to support the implementation or development of this policy or practice?**

- Current Business Continuity Policy and Business Continuity Plan
- Revised Business Continuity Policy
- Feedback from SQA Business Continuity Steering Group
- Feedback from SQA Business Continuity Co-ordinators
- Feedback from SQA Incident Management Team (IMT) Leads and Support

**What are the aims of this policy or practice?**

The purpose of this policy is to have a Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) in place that will allow SQA to provide:

- plans to respond to an emerging incident
- immediate response to an unplanned and unwarranted event which would affect SQA's ability to function normally.

It provides assurance to our stakeholders that we have plans in place to assist us in being able to continue to provide critical services in the event of an incident, and it helps us safeguard our reputation. We also aim to ensure that the welfare of employees is protected.

Roles and responsibilities have been identified to support implementation of the Policy and Business Continuity Plans. IMT is responsible for managing and co-ordinating SQA's response to and recovery from an incident that has the potential to disrupt business operations. IMT includes representatives with specialist understanding of Facilities, HR, ICT and Communications issues supported by experienced managers who have a good understanding of SQA's business priorities, as available and appropriate for the incident.

**How is the content of these aims relevant to equality groups?**

In terms of BC incidents – equality impact considerations will need to be considered in the event of an emergency or disaster; this relates to the potential impact on services, SQA employees, and learners.

Analysis of business and people requirements is fully documented as part of SQA's Business Continuity Plans. If reactive actions need to be implemented Facilities and IMT will consider the requirements to deliver prioritised activities including the needs of people with protected characteristics. These needs would need to be balanced with the requirements for the continuity of the business in each incident and cannot therefore be fully documented in advance.

Depending on the scale, scope, nature and severity of the incident or disruption, Business Continuity Plans should take into consideration the needs, as far as reasonably practicable, of all vulnerable groups that may be affected e.g., plans to evacuation of the elder, or physically less able; or plans to provide for different religious needs.

## Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

What stakeholders have you engaged with in the development of this policy or practice?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SQA Business Continuity Steering Group</li> <li>SQA Business Continuity Co-ordinators</li> <li>SQA IMT Leads and Support</li> </ul>

What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?																																																																																																																																														
Age	<p>SQA has a diverse workforce. The image below shows a table of staff by age group between 2019 to 2022. The majority of SQA staff are over the age of 45. SQA, like many other workforces across the UK have an ageing workforce. To tackle this, SQA has an ongoing Young Talent Strategy, aimed at attracting and developing younger staff in SQA.</p> <p><b>Table 1.1: Age</b></p> <table><tr><th>Age bracket</th><th>2019 no</th><th>2019 %</th><th>2020 no</th><th>2020 %</th><th>2021 no</th><th>2021 %</th><th>2022 no</th><th>2022 %</th><th>Variance no</th><th>Variance %</th></tr><tr><td>16–24</td><td>59</td><td>6.32%</td><td>50</td><td>5.27%</td><td>49</td><td>4.93%</td><td>36</td><td>3.47%</td><td>-23</td><td>-2.85%</td></tr><tr><td>25–29</td><td>65</td><td>6.97%</td><td>60</td><td>6.32%</td><td>73</td><td>7.35%</td><td>105</td><td>10.14%</td><td>40</td><td>3.17%</td></tr><tr><td>30–34</td><td>123</td><td>13.18%</td><td>109</td><td>11.49%</td><td>96</td><td>9.67%</td><td>95</td><td>9.17%</td><td>-28</td><td>-4.01%</td></tr><tr><td>35–39</td><td>131</td><td>14.04%</td><td>145</td><td>15.28%</td><td>146</td><td>14.70%</td><td>144</td><td>13.90%</td><td>13</td><td>-0.14%</td></tr><tr><td>40–44</td><td>129</td><td>13.83%</td><td>135</td><td>14.23%</td><td>146</td><td>14.70%</td><td>150</td><td>14.48%</td><td>21</td><td>0.65%</td></tr><tr><td>45–49</td><td>116</td><td>12.43%</td><td>105</td><td>11.06%</td><td>113</td><td>11.38%</td><td>124</td><td>11.97%</td><td>8</td><td>-0.46%</td></tr><tr><td>50–54</td><td>125</td><td>13.40%</td><td>141</td><td>14.86%</td><td>131</td><td>13.19%</td><td>126</td><td>12.16%</td><td>1</td><td>-1.24%</td></tr><tr><td>55–59</td><td>119</td><td>12.75%</td><td>117</td><td>12.33%</td><td>122</td><td>12.29%</td><td>122</td><td>11.78%</td><td>3</td><td>-0.98%</td></tr><tr><td>60–64</td><td>53</td><td>5.68%</td><td>72</td><td>7.59%</td><td>81</td><td>8.16%</td><td>102</td><td>9.85%</td><td>49</td><td>4.16%</td></tr><tr><td>65+</td><td>13</td><td>1.39%</td><td>15</td><td>1.58%</td><td>36</td><td>3.63%</td><td>32</td><td>3.09%</td><td>19</td><td>1.70%</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>933</td><td>100.00%</td><td>949</td><td>100.00%</td><td>993</td><td>100.00%</td><td>1036</td><td>100.00%</td><td>103</td><td>11.04%</td></tr></table>										Age bracket	2019 no	2019 %	2020 no	2020 %	2021 no	2021 %	2022 no	2022 %	Variance no	Variance %	16–24	59	6.32%	50	5.27%	49	4.93%	36	3.47%	-23	-2.85%	25–29	65	6.97%	60	6.32%	73	7.35%	105	10.14%	40	3.17%	30–34	123	13.18%	109	11.49%	96	9.67%	95	9.17%	-28	-4.01%	35–39	131	14.04%	145	15.28%	146	14.70%	144	13.90%	13	-0.14%	40–44	129	13.83%	135	14.23%	146	14.70%	150	14.48%	21	0.65%	45–49	116	12.43%	105	11.06%	113	11.38%	124	11.97%	8	-0.46%	50–54	125	13.40%	141	14.86%	131	13.19%	126	12.16%	1	-1.24%	55–59	119	12.75%	117	12.33%	122	12.29%	122	11.78%	3	-0.98%	60–64	53	5.68%	72	7.59%	81	8.16%	102	9.85%	49	4.16%	65+	13	1.39%	15	1.58%	36	3.63%	32	3.09%	19	1.70%	Total	933	100.00%	949	100.00%	993	100.00%	1036	100.00%	103	11.04%
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Disability	SQA has a diverse workforce. In 2022, 8.01% of staff declared they have a disability.																																																																																																																																													
Race	In 2022, 3.38% defined themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority.																																																																																																																																													

<b>Religion or Belief</b>	The percentage of staff declaring their religion, belief or non-belief increased by 31.54% between 2019 and 2022. The percentage of those declaring has remained relatively stable within each category over the last three years with less than a 1.00% variance for all religion, belief or non-belief categories.
<b>Sex</b>	SQA has a diverse workforce. In 2022, 62.16% of staff identified as female and 37.84% as male.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	A total of 791 colleagues have declared their sexual orientation in 2020. This may be a result of the equality campaign encouraging colleagues to complete equality and diversity data in the second half of 2020. There was an increase in colleagues declaring they would 'prefer not to say', with the largest increase (6.97%, four) among grade 3.
<b>Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)</b>	SQA does not currently capture information regarding gender re-assignment.
<b>Marriage/Civil Partnership</b>	86.24% of colleagues declared their relationship status in 2020, an increase of 29.87% compared to 2019. Of those who provided this information, there are more colleagues who have declared they are married or in a civil partnership (44.66%) compared to those who have declared they are single (35.87%). For the purposes of this report, those who have declared their relationship status as married or in a civil partnership have been grouped together to compare with those who fall within the category of single, which groups the following: single, cohabiting/in a relationship, separated, widowed/surviving partner from civil partnership, divorced/dissolved civil partnership and other. 54 colleagues (5.71%) declared they would prefer not to say in 2020, which is an increase of 3.79%.
<b>Pregnancy / Maternity</b>	In 2020 1.05% or six female colleagues have had a period of maternity leave.
<b>Care experience (where relevant)</b>	SQA does not currently capture information regarding Care Experience.

## Impact and Opportunities for Action

The impact that a policy or practice has on an equality group may be different and this requires to be recorded. The impact may not always be negative. Actions are taken to address any differential impact, and include actions to mitigate against any negative impact, to advance equality and to foster good relations between groups.

Each section contains questions for each equality group. These questions are here to support consideration; however, you can provide further detail. Focus initially on the equality groups that would be affected by this policy. If you do not consider that certain equality groups would be affected by this policy, you may leave these sections.

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Age	<p>SQA considers that this policy, on balance, will have a perceived positive impact on employees of all ages as the policy aims to enhance the safety of staff by preventing, mitigating and controlling the impacts of incidents or emergencies.</p> <p>Analysis of business and people requirements is fully documented as part of SQA's Business Continuity Plans. If reactive actions need to be implemented Facilities and IMT will consider the requirements to deliver prioritised activities including the needs of people with protected characteristics. These needs would need to be balanced with the requirements for the continuity of the business in each incident and cannot therefore be fully documented in advance.</p> <p>For example, the policy incorporates identifying potential risks to SQA from the internal and external environment and ensuring resources are available to facilitate home working. Some conditions can be progressive in later life that can make walking or travelling in icy conditions more dangerous e.g., osteoporosis and therefore identifying bad weather and promoting working from home is those conditions increased the safety of staff with conditions due or aggravated by age.</p> <p>People who are older (aged 50 and over) and / or who have a disability are less likely to regard walking or cycling as viable alternatives to short car journeys; when an individual has both of these characteristics, this perception is much more marked. 60% of people aged 50 and over with a limiting disability felt it would be difficult to replace short car journeys with walking.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>Impact will need to be considered and recorded as part of the IMT response to each incident. BC Plans will encourage colleagues to consider the impact on different groups, Business areas can achieve this by promoting EDI staff training, having open lines of communication when contingency plans are created, incorporating best practice accessibility measures (such as providing plans in multiple formats), and actioning lessons learned where appropriate.</p>

	Foster good relations
	No actions identified
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Disability</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>Staff with disabilities could be more likely to use public transport and could become stranded in the event of this being cancelled. Could be more at risk of personal injury in hazardous conditions. Could disproportionately affect people with some mental health conditions e.g., increased anxiety.</p> <p>As above, impact will need to be considered and recorded as part of the IMT response to each incident. BC Plans will encourage colleagues to consider the impact on different groups.</p> <p>We adopt use of plain English and avoid the jargon in our policies, plans and supporting documentation. Consideration will also be given to whether the BC Policy or Plans need to be produced in different formats, available on request.</p> <p>We recognise that people with disabilities or other medical conditions, and those who are pregnant may find travel to work extremely challenging during periods of severe weather or travel disruption. In addition, some religions or beliefs may impact staff more during periods of severe heat. The policy addresses this by supporting managers to be aware of and provide extra support/consideration for employees in these equality groups.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No actions identified
	Foster good relations
	No actions identified.
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Race</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>As above, impact will need to be considered and recorded as part of the IMT response to each incident. BC Plans will encourage colleagues to consider the impact on different groups.</p> <p>Consideration will also be given to whether the BC Policy or Plans need to be produced in a language – though unlikely</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity

	No actions identified.
	Foster good relations
	No actions identified.
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	Some staff member's religion or belief may make them be more affected by incidents or SQA's recovery strategies at certain points in the religious calendar. Staff who identify as Muslim could be more susceptible to the effects of adverse weather (if hot/cold) during Ramadan (period of fasting).
	Colleagues would be encouraged to consider and acknowledge the impact on different groups which may also include notable religious holidays.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No actions identified.
	Foster good relations
	No actions identified.
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Sex</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	Potential negative impact on any staff with caring responsibilities as some ages more likely to have childcare or other caring responsibilities. If due to e.g., severe weather or other major incidents schools/nurseries/care homes may close, and other care services may be inhibited
	Widespread incidents, like severe weather and/or pandemics can also result in school and nursery closures which may inadvertently affect women who are more commonly the primary care giver. The Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) and recovery strategies aim to mitigate any negative impact on women by providing a variety of options for such situations.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No actions identified.
	Foster good relations
	No actions identified.



<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	We have no evidence in relation to SQA staff or from wider research that there is a significant impact, positive or negative, for this group in terms of this policy.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No actions identified.
	Foster good relations
	No actions identified.
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	We have no evidence in relation to SQA staff or from wider research that there is a significant impact, positive or negative, for this group in terms of this policy.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No actions identified.
	Foster good relations
	No actions identified.
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Marriage/Civil Partnership</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	We have no evidence in relation to SQA staff or from wider research that there is a significant impact, positive or negative, for this group in terms of this policy.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No actions identified.
	Foster good relations
	No actions identified.

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
<b>Pregnancy / Maternity</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	Impact will need to be considered and recorded as part of the IMT response to each incident. BC Plans will encourage colleagues to consider the impact on different groups, Business areas can achieve this by promoting EDI staff training, having open lines of communication when contingency plans are created, incorporating best practice accessibility measures (such as providing plans in multiple formats), and actioning lessons learned where appropriate. Anyone involved with Incident Management who is pregnant will undertake a risk assessment in line with BC role duties.
	Line Managers have responsibility for contacting staff on maternity leave to make them aware of any business continuity events and BC Plans that may impact their ability to contact colleagues or access organisational resources.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No actions identified.
	Foster good relations
<b>Considered by SQA</b>	General Equality Duty
<b>Care experience (where relevant)</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	Impact will need to be considered and recorded as part of the IMT response to each incident. BC Plans will encourage colleagues to consider the impact on different groups, Business areas can achieve this by promoting EDI staff training, having open lines of communication when contingency plans are created, incorporating best practice accessibility measures (such as providing plans in multiple formats), and actioning lessons learned where appropriate.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No actions identified.
	Foster good relations
	No actions identified.

## Rationale

If you are proceeding with a decision that may have a negative impact and are not putting in place actions to mitigate against this, please explain how this is objectively justified.

The nature of this policy requires further analysis of equality impact considerations as part of SQA's response to each BC incident – this has been recorded above. In the event of an emergency or disaster; equality impact considerations relating services and SQA employees would need to be considered. Analysis of business and people requirements is fully documented as part of SQA's Business Continuity Plans. If reactive actions need to be implemented Facilities and IMT will consider the requirements to deliver prioritised activities including the needs of people with protected characteristics.

Disability – Different formats of the policy and plans can be made available for our staff.

Race – Policy can be made available in different languages, if required.

Pregnancy/Maternity – Anyone involved with Incident Management who is pregnant will undertake a risk assessment in line with BC role duties. Line Managers have responsibility for contacting staff on maternity leave to make them aware of any business continuity events and BC Plans that may impact their ability to contact colleagues or access organisational resources.

There is no requirement to change the existing policy based on this assessment. We will consider any proposals to enhance and promote consideration of equality impact where possible. This could relate to BC Plans and Incident Management processes which would support our responsibilities to mainstream the general equality duty.