



Equality Impact Assessment (supporting guidance available)

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.

Agreed Schedule Review Date	By September 27	Additional Schedule Review Date	By September 26
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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.



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Required Actions	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
Actions taken to monitor the implementation of policy and the impact on equality groups (evidence and consultation)			[ONGOING RECORD]
Review and assess monthly establishment management information packs containing fundamental employment data on SQA employees	People Analytics, Governance & Systems Manager	Continuing to take place monthly	
Review on a quarterly basis of employment law, case law and legislative changes, and equalities updates (including reviewing EHRC website).	HR Shared Services Manager	Continuing to take place quarterly	
Review and assess feedback on a quarterly basis from joint trade unions (Unite and Unison) through SQA's Joint engagement forum and Policy review group.	HR Shared Services Manager	Continuing to take place quarterly	
Review and assess feedback on a quarterly basis from each of SQA's staff community network groups	HR Shared Services Manager	Continuing to take place quarterly	
Continue to review and assess on an quarterly basis SQA's engagement People survey	OD Manager	Commencing quarterly from March 2024	
Review and assess on an annual basis all SQA employee lifecycle data	People Analytics, Governance & Systems Manager	Continuing to take place annually	
Continue to review and assess every 2 years SQA's equality mainstreaming report [next report due March 2025]	People Reward and Equalities Manager	Continuing to take place	
Continue to review and assess every 2 years SQA's workforce equality monitoring report [next report due March 2025]	People Reward and Equalities Manager	Continuing to take place	



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Identified Actions: General Equality Duty	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
People Survey to continue to ask questions specifically relating to culture and reporting any wrongdoing. These results should be monitored.	OD Manager	Continuing to take place	
Appoint a whistle-blower' champion to drive the commitment to valuing whistleblowing and protecting whistle-blowers within the new organisation	People Director	Aug 2024	Reform remains under review and will be revisited when reform becomes clearer
Continue to raise awareness of the policy or procedures through all available means such as staff engagement, intranet sites, and other marketing communications.	Internal Communications Manager	Continuing to take place	
Consult with all relevant staff networks regarding the application of this policy.	HR Shared Service Manager	Continuing to take place	



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Policy Aims

Name of Policy or Practice:	Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure
New Policy or Revision?	Revision
Name of Policy Owner:	Head of Human Resources
Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion:	14 March 2024

What is the rationale for this policy or practice?
<p>The stated aim of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) <i>Whistleblowing</i> policy is:</p> <p>To provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any workplace wrongdoing. Wrongdoing is anything which causes colleagues legitimate concern and which they feel it is in the public interest to raise, and which can be defined as a 'qualifying disclosure'. (A full definition of this term is included in the policy, covering things such as: criminal offences, breach of any legal obligation, miscarriages of justice, danger to the health and safety of any individual, damage to the environment.)</p> <p>It sets out the procedure by which 'workers' (definition also included in policy) can report concerns to us about workplace practices, without fear of reprisals. Any 'worker' reporting a concern is protected when making a disclosure in the public interest by the <i>Public Interest Disclosure Act</i> (1998).</p> <p>The policy encourages 'workers' to raise any matters of genuine concern with SQA who will take any allegations seriously and investigate matters appropriately and as far as is possible, confidentially.</p>



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

Whistleblowing is protected by law (Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998) and is set out by government <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing>.

It states as a 'worker':

You're a whistle-blower if you're a worker and you report certain types of wrongdoing. This will usually be something you've seen at work - though not always. The wrongdoing you disclose must be in the public interest. This means, it must affect others. For example, the general public.

As a whistle-blower you're protected by law - you should not be treated unfairly or lose your job because you 'blow the whistle'.

You can raise your concern at any time about an incident that happened in the past, is happening now, or you believe will happen in the near future.

Who is protected by law:

You're protected if you're a worker, for example you're:

- an employee, such as a police officer, National Health Service (NHS) employee, office worker, factory worker
- a trainee, such as a student nurse
- an agency worker
- a member of a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)

It is important to note that not one person submitted a whistleblowing allegation in SQA during the last twelve months. We therefore conclude (i) This is a very insignificant data sample (ii) It is practically impossible to draw any meaningful conclusions in respect of Equality impact.



What evidence is there to support the implementation or development of this policy or practice? (continued)

SQA Definition within the policy Section 5.1 and 5.2

Definition of Whistleblowing:

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information that is in the public interest, by a member of staff or worker which relates to some malpractice, danger, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct in the workplace.

Definition of a Qualifying Disclosure:

This policy is distinct from our *Grievance Policy*. If you have a complaint relating to your personal circumstances in the workplace, then you should use the procedure in the *Grievance Policy*. The *Grievance Policy* and Procedure applies only to members of staff. You should use this policy and the procedure set out below to report concerns about malpractice within the organisation: which fall within the categories listed below; and where there is a public interest in disclosing (because it affects or could affect, for example, service users, customers, members of the public or other workers).

A qualifying disclosure is a disclosure of information which, in the reasonable belief of the worker making it, tends to show that one or more of the six specified types of malpractice has taken place, is taking place or is likely to take place. The types of malpractice covered are:

- criminal offences
- breach of any legal obligation
- miscarriages of justice
- danger to the health and safety of any individual
- damage to the environment
- deliberate concealing of information about any of these things. This might cover, for example, breaches of confidentiality; conflicts of interest; negligent advice; financial fraud, bribery, harassment of others; and health and safety breaches. Only disclosures concerning those actions falling strictly within the categories above will be eligible for the statutory protection outlined in section 5.3 below.



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What evidence is there to support the implementation or development of this policy or practice? (continued)

Evidence of Staff Consultation:

SQA People Survey asks the question ***“In SQA, people are encouraged to speak up when they identify a serious policy or delivery risk”***.

Organisational Culture - average score 76%

Question	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	% POSITIVE	VARIANCE FROM PREVIOUS SURVEY	VARIANCE FROM CSPS BENCHMARK
I am trusted to carry out my job effectively	48%	48%	5%	2%	1%	92%	+1	+1
I believe I would be supported if I try a new idea, even if it may not work	30%	48%	13%	6%	2%	79%	+1	+7
In SQA, people are encouraged to speak up when they identify a serious policy or delivery risk	22%	48%	21%	8%	4%	67%	-1	-5
I feel able to challenge inappropriate behaviour in the workplace	17%	45%	26%	8%	4%	62%	-1	-7

SQA colleagues were asked “In SQA People are encouraged to speak up when they identify a serious policy or delivery risk” A minority of employees (12%) disagreed or disagreed strongly with this question.

68% of the workforce agree with this statement; however, the remainder either “neither agree nor disagree; disagree; strongly disagree.



What are the aims of this policy or practice?

As previously stated, the aims of this policy are to:

To provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any workplace wrongdoing. Wrongdoing is anything which causes colleagues legitimate concern and which they feel it is in the public interest to raise, and which can be defined as a 'qualifying disclosure' (a full definition of this term is included in the policy, covering things such as: criminal offences, breach of any legal obligation, miscarriages of justice, danger to the health and safety of any individual, damage to the environment).

It sets out the procedure by which 'workers' (definition also included in policy) can report concerns to us about workplace practices, without fear of reprisals. Any 'worker' reporting a concern is protected when making a disclosure in the public interest by the Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998).

The policy encourages 'workers' to raise any matters of genuine concern with SQA who will take any allegations seriously and investigate matters appropriately and as far as is possible, confidentially.

The policy itself is divided in two discrete sections:

Policy Structure:

1: Part A – Policy detail.

2: Part B – Procedures for SQA managers / employees to follow.



What are the aims of this policy or practice? (continued)

The following SQA policies are also related to the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure:

- Addressing Financial Irregularity
- Anti-Bribery and Corruption
- Code of Conduct
- Dignity at Work
- Disciplinary
- Grievance
- Data Protection
- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement



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

SQA acknowledges that people who share / do not share, certain 'Protected Characteristics' may, on balance:

- Experience greater difficulties following or complying with the written requirements of a workplace policy e.g., articulating a complaint in writing - especially relevant for a person for whom English is not their first language or people with certain Disabilities.
- Experience higher levels of anxiety or reservations in respect of raising a formal complaint. For example, a very junior member of staff complaining about a senior manager, a person with neurodiversity who may feel they are not able to express themselves very well compared to someone who does not have this characteristic, a person who has a background / culture or preserving 'face' and may consequentially feel less inclined to raise a complaint against (for example) a senior person for reasons of perceived 'respect'. (For further evidence of this, please see page 15 of this document.)
- Feel less comfortable discussing their concerns with people of the opposite Sex.

National evidence indicates that the two main barriers whistle-blowers face are: (1) A fear of reprisal as a result of making a disclosure and (2) That no action will be taken if they do make the decision to 'blow the whistle'. There have been a number of high-profile cases, including evidence collated by the Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry¹, the Freedom to Speak Up Independent Review into creating an open and honest culture in the NHS² and the Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards³
([Whistleblowing: Guidance for Employers and Code of Practice \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414242/Whistleblowing_Guidance_for_Employers_and_Code_of_Practice.pdf))

The development, implementation, and analysis of the effects of this policy are therefore highly relevant to people from all Equality groups as they may risk experiencing disproportionate impacts or outcomes.

It is important that the SQA identifies and takes action to mitigate or remove any disadvantage identified which is the overall purpose of this Equality Impact Assessment.



Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

What stakeholders have you engaged within the development of this policy or practice?

This policy has been developed in consultation with SQA's recognised Trades Unions, Unite and Unison, who represent all staff throughout the organisation.

In addition, as this is an internal policy, SQA has only consulted with internal groups. These include:

- ACE (Appreciate Culture and Ethnicity) Network.
- SQA Disability Network.
- SQA Rainbow Network.
- Women's Network.

Evidence of Stakeholder Engagement:

Trade Union Consultation Review Group (Policy Review Group):

Members of SQA Human Resources department and trade union representatives from Unite the Union and Unison meet weekly in SQA via the PRG. SQA's trade union representatives are also given statutory time off to attend relevant training, meetings and other information gathering activities as supported in our union framework agreement.

Evidence of all meeting minutes, actions and consultation undertaken with the PRG group (including Equality considerations in respect of all policies, activities and functions) is detailed on a dedicated SQA shared resources site.



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What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?

Age:

Table 1.1: Age

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%

Table 1.1 shows the age profile of the organisation from 2019 to 2022

Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2021-23

[Equalities: SQA workforce monitoring report 2021-23](#)

What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?

Disability

Table 3.1: Disability

Disability	2019 number	2019 %	2020 number	2020 %	2021 number	2021 %	2022 number	2022 %	Variance number	Variance %
No	417	44.69%	651	68.60%	683	68.78%	697	67.28%	280	22.59%
Not Specified	444	47.59%	152	16.02%	152	15.31%	184	17.76%	-260	-29.83%
Prefer not to say	21	2.25%	68	7.17%	76	7.65%	72	6.95%	51	4.70%
Yes	51	5.47%	78	8.22%	82	8.26%	83	8.01%	32	2.54%
Total	933	100.00%	949	100.00%	993	100.00%	1036	100.00%	103	0.00%

Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2021-23

[Equalities: SQA workforce monitoring report 2021-23](#)

Table 3.1 shows the composition of the disability self-reporting categories for the period from 2019 to 2022.

Of those staff who have declared a disability, females made up 58.54% (2021) and 53.01% (2022) of the population, and males 41.46% (2021) and 46.99% (2022). Due to the low number of staff declaring a disability within SQA we are unable to publish further intersectional data in relation to disability and other protected characteristics.



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What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?

**Race
Ethnicity**

There is mixed data available which suggests cultural norms will have an impact on how individuals perceive and action whistleblowing. (<https://www.whistleblowerattorneys.com/blog/best-worst-countries-whistleblowers>)

There is no statistical data to confirm this theory, however there are articles available that suggest this is global business data and companies should consider this.

Table 7.1: Race

Ethnicity	2019 number	2019%	2020 number	2020%	2021 number	2021%	2022 number	2022%
African, Scottish African or British African	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	<5	<0.48%
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian	13	1.39%	20	2.11%	24	2.42%	25	2.41%
Caribbean or Black	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Mixed or multiple ethnic group	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Not specified	383	41.05%	123	12.96%	101	10.17%	122	11.78%
Other ethnic group	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Prefer not to say	10	1.07%	33	3.48%	34	3.42%	30	2.90%
White	523	56.06%	763	80.40%	825	83.08%	849	81.95%

Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2021-23

[Equalities: SQA workforce monitoring report 2021-23](#)

Table 7.1 shows the ethnic minority background of staff within the organisation for the period from 2019 to 2022

Just under 3.50% staff declared they were from an ethnic minority background in both 2021 (3.32%) and 2022 (3.38%). However, it is encouraging to note that the percentage of staff declaring they are from an ethnic minority background has increased overall by 3.97% between 2019 and 2022. The percentage of staff within each ethnic minority category has remained relatively stable over the last three years.



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What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment? (continued)

Religion or Belief

Table 8.1: Religion or belief

Religion or belief	2019 number	2019%	2020 number	2020%	2021 number	2021%	2022 number	2022%
Another religion or body	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	6	0.60%	6	0.58%
Buddhist	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Church of Scotland	91	9.75%	122	12.86%	127	12.79%	125	12.07%
Hindu	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	7	0.70%	8	0.77%
Jewish	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Muslim	7	0.75%	11	1.16%	10	1.01%	11	1.06%
None	286	30.65%	421	44.36%	462	46.53%	489	47.20%
Not specified	405	43.41%	126	13.28%	102	10.27%	123	11.87%
Other Christian	26	2.79%	43	4.53%	44	4.43%	44	4.25%
Prefer not to say	35	3.75%	98	10.33%	103	10.37%	103	9.94%
Roman Catholic	76	8.15%	118	12.43%	129	12.99%	123	11.87%
Sikh	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%

Table 8.1 shows the religion, belief or non-belief status of staff within the organisation for the period from 2019 to 2022.

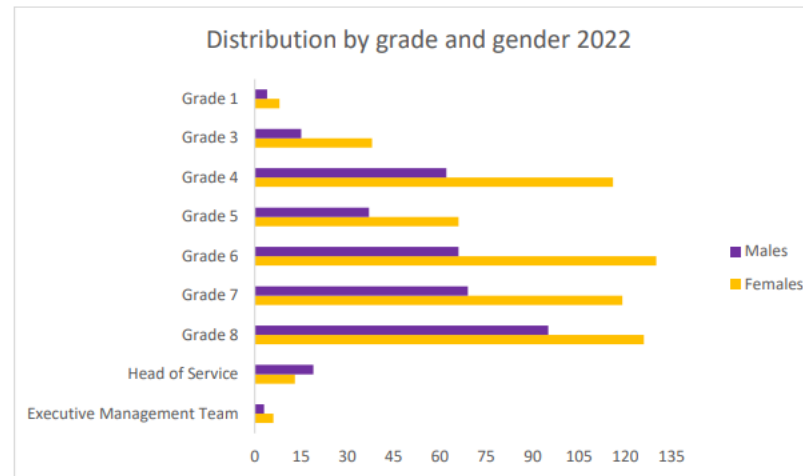
Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2021-23

[Equalities: SQA workforce monitoring report 2021-23](#)

Sex

Gender

Distribution by grade and gender of SQA grade 1 – EMT



Source: SQA Summary of Equal Pay Audit 2023

[Scottish Qualifications Authority \(sqa.org.uk\)](https://www.sqa.org.uk)

The majority of the 2.9 million lone-parent families in 2022 were headed by a lone mother (2.5 million, 84%)

Source: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2022>

59% of unpaid carers are women (Census 2021). Women are more likely to become carers and to provide more hours of unpaid care than men. More women than men provide high intensity care at ages when they would expect to be in paid work (Petrillo and Bennett, 2022)

Source: Carers UK

There are 1.25 million sandwich carers in the UK. These are people caring for an older relative as well as bringing up a family. 68% (850,743) are women.

Source: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/campaigning/care-in-crisis/breaking-point-report/>



What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment? (continued)

Sexual Orientation	SQA Workforce								
	Table 10.1: Sexual orientation								
	Sexual Orientation	2019 number	2019%	2020 number	2020%	2021 number	2021%	2022 number	2022%
	Bisexual	9	0.96%	12	1.26%	15	1.51%	16	1.54%
	Gay man	13	1.39%	20	2.11%	21	2.11%	23	2.22%
	Gay woman / lesbian	9	0.96%	10	1.05%	12	1.21%	12	1.16%
	Heterosexual / straight	431	46.20%	670	70.60%	700	70.49%	702	67.76%
	In another way	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
	Not specified	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	156	15.71%	189	18.24%
	Not sure	26	2.79%	76	8.01%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Prefer not to say	443	47.48%	158	16.65%	84	8.46%	88	8.49%	
<p>Table 10.1 shows the composition of staff sexual orientation within the organisation for the period 2019 to 2022.</p> <p>Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2021-23 Equalities: SQA workforce monitoring report 2021-23</p>									



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What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment? (continued)

**Gender Re-assignment
(Gender identity and transgender)**

Due to the low number of staff reporting as transgender or describing their gender identity ‘in another way’, we are unable to publish further data in relation to gender reassignment or gender identity. This data is, however, monitored internally.

Marriage/Civil Partnership

Table 5.1: Relationship status

Relationship status	2019 number	2019 %	2020 number	2020 %	2021 number	2021 %	2022 number	2022 %
Civil Partnership	7	0.75%	7	0.74%	8	0.81%	9	0.87%
Co-habiting/in a relationship	80	8.57%	112	11.80%	122	12.29%	122	11.78%
Divorced/Dissolved Civil Partnership	14	1.50%	16	1.69%	17	1.71%	19	1.83%
Married	265	28.40%	370	38.99%	425	42.80%	416	40.15%
Married/Civil Partnership	8	0.86%	12	1.26%	14	1.41%	16	1.54%
Not Specified	407	43.62%	179	18.86%	102	10.27%	127	12.26%
Other	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	7	0.70%	9	0.87%
Prefer not to say	18	1.93%	49	5.16%	55	5.54%	59	5.69%
Separated	6	0.64%	12	1.26%	12	1.21%	13	1.25%
Single	122	13.08%	183	19.28%	224	22.56%	239	23.07%
Widowed/surviving partner from Civil Partnership	< 5	< 0.54%	6	0.63%	7	0.70%	7	0.68%

Table 5.1 shows the marriage and civil partnership status of staff within the organisation for the period from 2019 to 2022.

Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2021-23

[Equalities: SQA workforce monitoring report 2021-23](#)



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Pregnancy / Maternity	Table 6.1: Pregnancy and maternity								
	Pregnancy and maternity	2019 number	2019 %	2020 number	2020 %	2021 number	2021 %	2022 number	2022 %
	Contract ended as planned					1	3.33%		0.00%
	Due to return to work					0	0.00%	11	40.00%
	Resigned					0	0.00%	1	4.00%
	Returned to work	20	100.00%	10	100.00%	29	96.67%	14	56.00%
	Total	20	100.00%	10	100.00%	30	100.00%	26	100.00%
<p>Table 6.1 details the number of staff who have taken maternity leave, whether they are still on maternity leave (due to return to work), have returned to work following maternity leave, resigned following maternity leave, or their fixed-term contract ended (contract ended as planned).</p> <p>Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2021-23 Equalities: SQA workforce monitoring report 2021-23</p>									

What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment? (continued)	
Care experience (where relevant)	SQA does not currently collect Care Experience data.



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Impact and Opportunities for Action

The impact that a policy or practice has on an equality group may be different and needs 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.

Use of the term Discrimination:

Please note that for the purposes of this document we have used the term Discrimination as a generic descriptor which takes into account six discrete elements:

- Direct Discrimination
- Indirect Discrimination
- Harassment
- Victimisation
- Discrimination by perception
- Associative discrimination



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Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Age	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the <i>Equality Act 2010</i> .
	<p>Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p>This policy provides an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any workplace wrongdoing.</p> <p>The policy should therefore have a positive impact on all employees of all <i>Age</i> groups as it provides a formal process for reporting wrongdoing.</p> <p>We recognise that on balance, some younger workers may, experience greater reservations about raising a complaint - perhaps for fear of not being taken seriously. Conversely, some older workers may feel less inclined to raise a complaint for fear of losing their job. However, as there is little national evidence and no local SQA evidence to support this conjecture, we conclude a neutral impact for this Equality group.</p> <p>Neutral Impact Recorded.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	All SQA employees are entitled to use, access and be subjected to the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure and there is no evidence to indicate that this policy could affect employees differently or less favourably, on the grounds of their <i>Age</i> .



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	Foster good relations
Age	<p>There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between employees of different Age groups.</p> <p><u>There is currently no Age-related staff network group. An identified action point from this Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) which, if realised, could greatly assists in fostering good relations between employees of different Ages.</u></p>



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Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Disability	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p>This policy provides an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any workplace wrongdoing.</p> <p>The policy should therefore have a positive impact on all employees - including people who have / do not have a <i>Disability</i>.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that on balance, some people with disabilities may experience greater difficulties articulating a complaint or reading complicated information. Whilst the policy does currently offer the ‘right to be accompanied’, <u>a previous recommendation has been acted on that a short paragraph be added to the policy entitled “Supporting you in raising a concern”</u>. This states virtual meetings would be considered, your companion may speak on your behalf, interpreters may be available etc. it is considered this recommendation to be particularly important given the staff survey results reported on page six of this document.</p> <p>Positive Impact Recorded.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>The existing policy refers to support being possible for whistle-blowers with a disability who require a companion to assist them attending meetings associated with this process and also lists colleague’s responsibilities to make others aware of any special requirements that they have to enable them to access and use the policy.</p> <p>Also, implementation of the action proposed above would also greatly assist in advancing equality of opportunity for employees who have a <i>Disability</i>.</p>



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Foster good relations

Disability

The outcomes of the policy should continue to be monitored for any trends that suggests employees may be disadvantaged directly or indirectly as a result of their *Disability*.

SQA's Disability network group have a remit to:

- 1: Promote and enhance disability equality in SQA
- 2: Position SQA as an inclusive employer of choice that welcomes, embraces and celebrates the contribution of a diverse workforce
- 3: Supporting SQA to become a *Disability Confident* leader in Scotland'.

Consulting the policy's aims and processes with this group would both help to check its overall impact but also explore opportunities for further development.

SQA are also a *Disability Confident* employer so continued promotion and engagement with the objectives of the scheme is also essential in continuing to foster good relations between employees who are disabled / not disabled.



Equality Impact Assessment Whistleblowing Policy – V2.0

Advance equality of opportunity	
Race (continued)	<p>SQA employees are entitled to use, access and be subjected to <i>the</i> Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.</p> <p>There is no empirical evidence to indicate that this policy affects employees differently or less favourably, on the grounds of their Race or Ethnicity. Further implementation of the action proposed on the previous page would also assist in advancing <i>Equality of Opportunity</i> for employees of different racial groups.</p>
Foster good relations	
Race (continued)	<p>There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between employees of different <i>Race</i> or <i>Ethnicity</i>.</p> <p>The ACE Network exists to foster good relations, provide support, create an overall sense of belonging that may not exist elsewhere in the organisation. It also exists with the aim of sharing experiences, providing feedback and recommendations as to how SQA can promote a more diverse and inclusive workplace.</p> <p>We encourage colleagues, regardless of race or ethnicity, to participate in and support the network, with the understanding that we will work together towards achieving our aims and objectives.'</p> <p><u>Consulting with this network in respect of the contents of this policy could also help in fostering good relations between employees of different racial groups.</u></p>



Equality Impact Assessment Whistleblowing Policy – V2.0

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
<p>Religion or Belief</p>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p>
	<p>Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p>This policy provides an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any workplace wrongdoing.</p> <p>The policy should therefore have a positive impact on all employees of different <i>Religions and Philosophical Belief Systems</i>.</p> <p>We recognise that some people may feel less inclined to raise a complaint for reasons of culture / religion. For actions and recommendations, please see the previous section of this assessment (<i>Race</i>).</p> <p>Positive Impact Recorded.</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>All SQA employees from all <i>Religions / Beliefs</i> are entitled to use, access and be subjected to <i>the</i> Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.</p> <p>There is no empirical evidence to indicate that this policy affects employees differently or less favourably, on the grounds of their <i>Religion or Philosophical Belief System</i>.</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
<p>Please see actions for the previous section (<i>Race</i>).</p>	



Equality Impact Assessment Whistleblowing Policy – V2.0

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sex	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p>SQA data shows that there is significant majority of women in the workforce (585) compared to males (362). This could suggest that there may be more women who raise concerns than males. However, SQA currently has insignificant data on whistleblowing by Sex.</p> <p>Across all SQA staff there is a very small sample size of staff who have utilised this policy. There is insignificant data to suggest employees protected under the Sex protected characteristic have specific issues in accessing or utilising the policy.</p> <p>Whistleblowing is governed by law, therefore SQA has a legal requirement to ensure this policy is available to all 'workers. We believe the policy, being governed by law and protecting the individual from retaliation should alleviate their concerns.</p> <p>Neutral Equality related impact is therefore recorded in this area.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	All SQA employees are entitled to use, access and be subjected to the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure and there is no evidence to indicate that this policy could affect employees differently or less favourably, on the grounds of their Sex



Equality Impact Assessment Whistleblowing Policy – V2.0

Foster good relations

Sex
(continued)

SQA undertakes a public sector equality duty report every two years which assists us to maintain equal opportunities best practice and identify barriers to workforce equality and diversity. SQA also undertakes a people survey which recognise the value and contribution of all our colleagues. The survey is carried out annually and aims to continue to build on areas for improvement

In SQA, the **Women’s** network ‘provides a welcoming space for women across the organisation. Through open meetings and events there are opportunities to get to know one another, offer and receive support, and influence SQA policy development in areas of equality and inclusion. This network is exploring exciting developments such as informal mentoring and liaising with other staff networks.

Speaking to members of this network directly will help SQA measure the impact of this policy and explore ways we can improve its direction and profile in SQA. Specifically, to question whether it helps explain how to handle a problem and detail what support is available in and outside the organisation if someone is considering whistleblowing.



Equality Impact Assessment Whistleblowing Policy – V2.0

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sexual Orientation	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p>This policy provides an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any workplace wrongdoing. The policy should therefore have a positive impact on all employees - including people of all <i>Sexual Orientations</i>.</p> <p>We can identify no reasonable risks indicating that this policy could disproportionately impact a person on the grounds of their <i>Sexual Orientation</i>.</p> <p>Neutral Equality related impact is therefore recorded in this area.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>All SQA employees are entitled to use, access and be subjected to the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure and there is no evidence to indicate that this policy could affect employees differently or less favourably, on the grounds of their <i>Sexual Orientation</i>.</p>
	Foster good relations
	<p>The <i>Rainbow Network</i> is SQA's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ+) colleague network. <u>Measuring the impact of the policy by speaking directly to the <i>Rainbow</i> network could assist in helping to Foster Good Relations between employees of different sexual orientations or LGBTQ+ status.</u></p>



Equality Impact Assessment Whistleblowing Policy – V2.0

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
<p>Gender Identity.</p> <p>This includes:</p> <p>Gender Re-assignment</p> <p>Non-Binary</p> <p>Gender Fluid</p>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p>The <i>Equality Act 2010</i> protects employees against discrimination if they are absent from work related to <i>Gender Reassignment</i>. This is defined when a person transitions from one Gender to another. The protection against discrimination includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposing to undergo a Gender transition. ▪ Undergoing the process of Gender transitioning. ▪ As a result of Gender transition. <p>This policy provides an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any workplace wrongdoing. The policy should therefore have a positive impact on all employees. We can identify no reasonable risks indicating that this policy could disproportionately impact a person on the grounds of their <i>Transgender</i> status.</p> <p>Neutral Equality related impact is therefore recorded in this area.</p>



Equality Impact Assessment Whistleblowing Policy – V2.0

Advance equality of opportunity

Gender Identity.

This includes:

Gender Re-assignment

Non-Binary

Gender Fluid

The SQA currently does not have a *Gender Identity* policy providing background information to SQA managers and employees in respect of:

- People who identify as the Gender they were assigned at birth. (*Cisgender*)
- People who identify with Gender that is different to that assigned at birth. (*Transgender*)
- People who identify with multiple Genders. (e.g., *Non-Binary* and *Gender Fluid*.)

(Note this list is illustrative and is not intended to be definitive.)

Whilst, with the exception of *Gender Reassignment*, there is currently no legal obligation placed on the SQA to provide Equality of Opportunity to people who identify as different Genders, it is a very relevant modern consideration – particularly in academic environments such as schools, colleges and universities. (Once again, highly relevant to the SQA.)

Foster good relations

There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between people of different *Gender Identities* or who are LGBTQ+.

further recommendations at this time.



Equality Impact Assessment Whistleblowing Policy – V2.0

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Marriage/Civil Partnership	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p>This policy provides an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any workplace wrongdoing. The policy should therefore have a positive impact on all employees - including people of all different marital status.</p> <p>We conclude there is no evidence to suggest that this policy may impact directly / indirectly on people who are <i>Married</i> or in a <i>Civil Partnership</i> and therefore make no further recommendations in this area.</p> <p>Neutral Equality related impact is therefore recorded in this area.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>All SQA employees are entitled to use, access and be subjected to the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure and there is no evidence to indicate that this policy could affect employees differently or less favourably, on the grounds of their <i>Marital Status</i>.</p>
	Foster good relations
	<p>There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between employees of different <i>Marital Status</i>.</p> <p>No further recommendations are made in respect of this in relation to this policy.</p>



Equality Impact Assessment Whistleblowing Policy – V2.0

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Pregnancy / Maternity	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>Please refer to the separate SQA policy – <i>Maternity, Paternity and Adoption</i></p> <p>Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p>We conclude there is no evidence to suggest that this policy may impact directly / indirectly on people who are pregnant or on maternity and therefore make no further recommendations in this area.</p> <p>Neutral Equality related impact is therefore recorded in this area.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	All SQA employees are entitled to use, access and be subjected to the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure and there is no evidence to indicate that this policy could affect employees differently or less favourably, on the grounds of <i>Pregnancy/Maternity</i> .
	Foster good relations
	<p>There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between employees that are Pregnant or on Maternity.</p> <p>No recommendations are made in respect of this in relation to this policy.</p>



Equality Impact Assessment Whistleblowing Policy – V2.0

Considered by SQA	General Equality Duty
Care experience (where relevant)	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	Whilst there is currently no evidence to suggest that care experience colleagues are placed at a disadvantage compared to other colleagues (or vice versa), it is recommended that data is collected and an analysis, by care experience, be performed of the 'lifecycle' of colleagues to identify any adverse trends and consider what support for growth and performance is needed.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	All SQA employees are entitled to use, access and be subjected to the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure and there is no evidence to indicate that this policy could affect employees differently or less favourably, on the grounds of Care Experience. The absence of evidence should be rectified, if possible, by collection of data relating to care experience.
	Foster Good Relations
	There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between employees that are Care Experienced



Equality Impact Assessment Whistleblowing Policy – V2.0

Miscellaneous:

Other impacts identified as part of this EqIA which generally have a positive impact on all SQA employees include:

- A SQA employee assistance programme providing employees with confidential support and guidance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Trade union representatives who can provide members with advice, help and support relating to sickness absences
- Mental Health First Aiders who are available as a first point of contact in the SQA.
- The *Able Futures* service who can be contacted for ongoing professional support for mental health and wellbeing.
- The SQA occupational health provider offers medical advice and support on staying healthy at work.
- Internally, the SQA Human Resources team can provide confidential support and advice to employees.
- The SQA Parent and Carers Network provides support to colleagues. This network aims to provide a safe and confidential space to allow parents and carers to support each other, share ideas, current challenges, knowledge and experiences.

Additionally, the SQA is committed to being a supportive and inclusive employer and is members of and/or accredited by various organisations these include:

- Disability Confident Employer
- Hidden Disability Sunflower Scheme Member
- Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion Member
- Happy to Talk Flexible Working Employer
- Accreditation as a Scottish Living Wage Employer
- Business in the Community Race at Work Charter Signatory
- Dying to Work – Charter Member
- Stonewall Diversity Champion