

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	March 2025	Additional Schedule Review Date	
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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.

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]
Begin and maintain an anonymised log of employees who require additional requirements in travel or accommodation	Purchasing Manager	Feb 2024	
Begin and maintain an anonymised log of employees who require additional spend over the daily allowance on the basis of a protected characteristic	Purchasing Manager	Feb 2024	

Identified Actions	General Equality Duty	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
[LIST]	[CROSS REFERENCE]			
Add comment about flexible allowances based on dietary requirements to policy	Fostering Good Relations, Eliminating Discrimination	Procurement Manager	Feb 14th 2023	
Check the travel insurance provision for staff with pre-existing conditions or children in-utero	Eliminate unlawful discrimination	Purchasing Manager	Feb 14th 2023	Completed, and reflected in EqIA

Name of Policy or practice	Travel, Accommodation and Expenses Policy
New Policy or Revision	Revision
Name of Policy Owner	Procurement Manager
Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion	March 2023

Policy Aims

What is the rationale for this policy or practice?
To protect financial interests of SQA, but allow employees to conduct business away from the office. Due to the nature of the business staff may have to attend meetings that will not always be held in the offices as they may be with external customers. We also have teams within the organisation that have cross site team members, managers and staff members may have to travel to other sites to attend meetings. (for example: Team meetings or one to ones).
What evidence is there to support the implementation or development of this policy or practice?
Best practice – this is to ensure that we are using budgets to the best value. It also allows the organisation to ensure that our travellers are safe when travelling and staying in reputable venues. This is why we use trusted suppliers. By using an external travel company, we are safe in knowing that by booking through them everything is recorded and monitored so if an incident occurs there is an automatic process put in place to ensure the safety of our travellers.
What are the aims of this policy or practice?
Policy sets out the processes by which travel, and accommodation can be booked. It sets out expenses which can and cannot be claimed. The policy applies to staff. By having processes and policy in place it ensures that staff understand what they can and cannot do. It will prevent any ambiguity.
How is the content of these aims relevant to equality groups?
It provides routes for people (staff) to travel, stay, and claim expenses when working away from the office. Different people may have different needs, which may be based on their protected characteristics. Accommodations can be made to travel, or accommodation provision based on the staff members' need. The policy is response to new flexible working arrangements, to allow staff to travel from the home-working base.

Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

What stakeholders have you engaged with in the development of this policy or practice?	
<p>Director of Business Development – This was to check that the wording for international travel was clear and concise.</p> <p>Benchmarking exercise – this was to establish that the rates for travel and accommodation and our policy were not out of line with other organisations.</p> <p>We benchmarked against 5 other organisations and our findings were that our policy and rates were in line with theirs.</p> <p>Working group – comprising all business areas in SQA. (This was taken when the policy was first developed in 2019). Due to the rigorous work that was done throughout the working group it was agreed that there would be no requirement to hold a working group for the revision unless there were major changes in the policy In the working group it was agreed that if there were any major changes that this should be reviewed by creating a working group again. This will be considered after the reform.</p>	

What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?	
Age	<p>The majority of SQA employees are in the mid-range age bandings. A total of 79% workers are aged between 30 – 59. Less than 2% of SQA employees are aged 60+ and the SQA has recently seen a decrease in younger (under 35) employees. Comparisons between 2019 and 2020 data show that the greatest increase in the proportion of female colleagues is within the 60–64 age band - an increase of 12 colleagues.</p> <p>The 30–34 age band saw the largest reduction of female colleagues – a total of seven people.</p> <p>This information can be found in table 1.05 at workforceequality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf (sqa.org.uk)</p>
Disability	<p>A total of 8.2% of SQA employees declared a disability last year. Declaration rates have significantly improved from a total response rate under the Not Disclosed / Prefer not to say category of 49.9% in 2019 (roughly half of employees) to a much reduced 23.1 % in 2020.</p> <p>Head of Service has the largest percentage of colleagues declaring a disability (13%) whereas Grade 6 has the largest overall number of colleagues declaring a disability at 23%. This information is in table 1.07 at workforce-equalitymonitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf (sqa.org.uk)</p> <p>The Expenses daily allowance provides a fixed daily budget for sustenance; however, disabled people may have different needs. Looking specifically at gluten-free foods, a 2018 UK study showed that some items cost on average 159% more than their conventional counterparts. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6213709/</p>
Race	<p>Currently only 3% of SQA employees declared themselves as Minority Ethnicity against a national (Scotland) average of 5%. This data is in table 1.12 at workforce-equality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf (sqa.org.uk)</p>

Religion or Belief	<p>29.82 colleagues say they are Christian, 17.28% are non-Christian, 29.29% declared no religion, 10.33% preferred not to say, 13.28% did not provide any information.</p> <p>For the purposes of this report those who have declared their religion or belief as Roman Catholic, Church of Scotland, Christian: Other have been grouped as Christian religion or belief to provide comparison to those who fall within the category of non-Christian, which comprises colleagues who have declared their religion or belief as Muslim, Hindu, Sikhism, Buddhist, Hinduism, other philosophical belief and another religion or body.</p> <p>This data is available at Colleagues by religion or belief (as in table 1.16) workforceequality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf (sqa.org.uk)</p> <p>Many religious or philosophical belief ascribe a specialist diet associated with a person's beliefs. The Expenses daily allowance provides a fixed daily budget for sustenance; however, often specialist foods, such as those required in some religions or beliefs can be more costly. The Jewish Chronicle conducted a study of the Kosher Chicken Index and found that eating out at kosher restaurants and buying kosher meat costs about £2,000 additional to standard expenses per year: https://www.businessinsider.com/living-a-kosher-life-costs-an-extra-12700-in-britain-2016-1?r=US&IR=T</p>
Sex	<p>A greater number of SQA employees overall are female - 62% female versus 38% male. A 60% representation of females across most grades is evident with a decrease to circa 40% for more senior grades. This data is available from Table 1.05: Colleagues by age band and gender (sex) workforce-equality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf (sqa.org.uk)</p>
Sexual Orientation	<p>70.60% colleagues say they are heterosexual, 1.26% bisexual, 2.11% gay man, 1.05% gay woman, 0.21% in another way, 0.11% not sure, 8.01% prefer not to say and 16.65% did not provide information.</p> <p>This data is available at Table 1.18 Colleagues by Sexual Orientation workforce-equality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf (sqa.org.uk)</p>
Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)	<p>SQA currently does not report on this protected characteristic in order to maintain the anonymity of the few staff who responded in a given way.</p>
Marriage/Civil Partnership	<p>SQA currently does not report on this protected characteristic.</p>
Pregnancy / Maternity	<p>In 2020, approximately 1.05% of staff were pregnant</p>
Care experience (where relevant)	<p>SQA currently does not report on this protected characteristic.</p>

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	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	No differential impact is noted based on age
	Advance equality of opportunity
	POSITIVE impact - Employees of any length of employment are eligible to travel and claim expenses under this policy. This effectively removes any unfair treatment of younger employees starting their career with SQA
	Foster good relations
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Disability	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>POSITIVE IMPACT – Disability-related dietary requirements can result in staff needing speciality foods, which is often associated with a premium price. In practice the policy allows for flexible allowances based on personal needs.</p> <p>It is not clear at current whether SQA's travel insurance is inclusive of/provides cover for staff with pre-existing medical conditions</p>

	As a result of this EqIA, the policy has been updated to reflect this flexibility. Positive impact recorded.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	The process allows staff members to request accessible travel options and allows procurement colleagues to flexibly find travel and accommodation provision that works for the staff member. The staff members are included in the discussion and provision, to ensure that their needs are adequately met.
	Foster good relations
	POSITIVE impact – all employees, regardless of disability status are asked if they need any extra provision. This approaches the issue sensitively, doesn't single out disabled employees, and could spark conversations with non-disabled employees.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Race	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	No differential impact is noted based on race
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No differential impact is noted based race
	Foster good relations
	No differential impact is noted based race
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Religion or Belief	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	POSITIVE IMPACT – Religious and belief-based diets can be considered as speciality foods, which is often associated with a premium price. In practice the policy allows for flexible allowances based on personal needs.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No differential impact noted on the basis of religion or belief.

	Foster good relations
	No differential impact noted on the basis of religion or belief.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sex	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	No differential impact is noted based on sex
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No differential impact is noted based on sex
	Foster good relations
	No differential impact is noted based on sex
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sexual Orientation	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	No differential impact is noted based on sexual orientation
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No differential impact is noted based on sexual orientation
	Foster good relations
	No differential impact is noted based on sexual orientation
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Gender Re-assignment	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

(Gender identity and transgender)	No differential impact is noted based on trans status
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No differential impact is noted based on trans status
	Foster good relations
	No differential impact is noted based on trans status
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
	No differential impact is noted based on marriage or civil partnership.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No differential impact is noted based on marriage or civil partnership.
	Foster good relations
	No differential impact is noted based on marriage or civil partnership.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Pregnancy / Maternity	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	No differential impact is noted on the basis of pregnancy or maternity.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	Staff who are pregnant are never prevented from travelling for work if it is their wish. The health and wellbeing risks are personal risk undertaken. However, SQA provides health insurance, in which the health of a child in-utero is covered in the travel insurance policy

	Foster good relations
	No differential impact is noted on the basis of pregnancy or maternity.
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
	No differential impact is noted based on care experience
	Advance equality of opportunity
	No differential impact is noted based on care experience
	Foster good relations
	No differential impact is noted based on care experience

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.