



## EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

### Summary results of the EqIA

**Title of policy/ practice/ process/ service:**

CLAO/PDSO Inverness premises move.

**Is the policy new (proposed), a revision to an existing policy or a review of current policy?**

New. This is a project to enable CLAO and PDSO to move from their respective existing premises to a new shared location in Inverness.

**Key findings from this assessment (or reason why an EqIA is not required):**

We found that there will be a number of direct and indirect positive impacts across a range of protected characteristics for clients, staff or others as a result of the move.

There are positive impacts for clients and staff of both services and other users of the premises from the move taking place. There is level access, the property is on one floor, reception, toilet, kitchen, open plan and meeting areas are accessible to wheelchair users, there are disabled toilets. The premises are a configurable open plan space allowing us opportunities to take into account the needs of different groups in the layout of the space and how it is used.

**Summary of actions taken because of this assessment:**

We have set up monitoring processes for data to be available at the point of review.

**Ongoing actions beyond implementation include:**

Ongoing actions are identified in Step 6 of this document.

**Lead person(s) for this assessment (job title and department only):**

Business Network Managers for CLAO and PDSO

Manager of Information Systems

Facilities Manager

Procurement Specialist

Head of Office - CLAO Highlands & Islands

Manager, Projects Office

**Senior responsible owner agreement that the policy has been fully assessed against the needs of the general duty (job title only):**

Head of CLAO

**Publication date (for completion by Communications):**

17/03/2022



## **Step 1 - Framing the planned change**

Discussing step 1 and step 2 with the Corporate Policy Officer (Equalities) at an early stage will help identify appropriate evidence. This may include support from the wider Policy and Development team.

### **1.1 Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy/ practice/ process/ service.**

This is a project to enable CLAO and PDSO to move from their respective existing premises to a new shared location in Inverness. A business case for the move identified a number of reasons why the move to shared premises should take place. Equality, including the need to make the premises more accessible, was an essential part of that business case which was agreed by the Scottish Government in December 2019.

For CLAO an objective of the move is that it will facilitate collaborative working with other advice providers, some of whom work with particular equality groups. Overall, the move aims to provide a more responsive and joined up service where the office premises will enable us to move ahead in a way that was restricted in our previous premises. The project for the office move has a number of workstreams including communications. The project aims, including in relation to accessibility and equalities are embedded into these workstreams.

### **1.2 Why is the change required?**

Old premises were not fit for purpose, did not support an optimal operational delivery model and the leases were coming to an end.

### **1.3 Who is affected by this policy/ practice/ process/ service?**

Primarily PDSO/CLAO clients and PDSO/CLAO/SLAB employees. Other legal and advice professionals, employees of justice partners and members of the public are also affected by these changes.

### **1.4 Policy/practice/process/service implementation date**

29 July 2021.

**1.5 What other SLAB policies or projects may be linked to or affected by changes to this policy/ practice/ process/ service?**  
**Other CLAO/PDSO/SLAB services will be affected by changes made as a result of the Inverness move, to the extent that they use the Inverness premises or interact with staff in the Inverness office.**

SLAB’s employee policies which apply to remote offices and which will be used to support employees for example with reasonable adjustments.

**Step 2: Consider the available evidence and data relevant to your policy/ practice/ process/service**

**2.1 What information is available about the experience of each equality group in relation to this policy/ practice/ process/ service?**

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
<b>Age</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SLAB’s <a href="#">applicants surveys</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">LSS profile of the profession 2018</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">SLAB civil solicitor survey</a></li> <li>4. SLAB administrative data (not published)</li> <li>5. <a href="#">Age and cognitive decline</a></li> <li>6. <a href="#">SLAB published data on staff demographics</a></li> <li>7. <a href="#">CLAO contact and client survey 2017</a></li> <li>8. <a href="#">Age UK</a></li> </ol>	<p>With age, the likelihood of experiencing chronic diseases, disability and immobility increases. Older people are more likely to have difficulties with mobility and find premises with steep stairs more difficult to access.(8) Please see evidence section on ‘Disability’ below.</p> <p>Older people are less likely to have home internet access. Older people are also less likely to use it at home or elsewhere. So older people are less likely to be able to access online services and may require access in an alternative way or to attend premises more often.(8)</p>

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
	<p>9. Designing a new workplace - survey (not published)</p>	<p>Age is the most important factor in relation to cognitive decline. Clients who are experiencing cognitive decline may find it easier to access appointments remotely in more familiar surroundings by telephone or online and facilities are available to accommodate this. (5)</p> <p>Older people are more vulnerable to COVID 19, although risk profile will change according to vaccination rates. (8)</p> <p>SLAB's applicant surveys show that for civil legal aid, 5% of applicants were 65 or over and 28% aged between 45 and 64. (1)</p> <p>SLAB's administrative data shows that 40% of civil legal aid applicants were aged 45+. In children's legal aid, 11% were aged 45+.(4)</p> <p>CLAO client and contact survey shows that there were respondents from all age groups but fewer in the 18-24 age groups, only 14 per cent and only 12 per cent in the 65 plus age group. The majority were 25-54. (7)</p> <p>PDSO's most recent client survey shows the majority were in the age group 45-54 (32%). The smallest group were 18-24 (5%). All other age groups were between 10 and 20%.</p> <p>In 2019-20, more than 50% of SLAB's staff were age 45+ years.(6)</p>

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
		<p>The most recent data from SLAB’s Designing a New Workplace survey from March 2021 shows that most of CLAO’s staff are aged between 35-54 years (48%). 39% are under 35 years, and 13% are 55+ years. 52% of PDSO staff are between 35-54 years, 15% are under 35 years and 35% are 55+ years.(9)</p> <p>For the profession in general (including paralegals), the survey suggests 38% are aged 46 to 65 years, with around 2% aged 66+ years. (2) Of the respondents to SLAB’s civil solicitor survey, 55% were over 45 years and 4% were aged 65+ years. (3)</p>
<b>Disability</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">The impacts of COVID-19 on equality in Scotland</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">Scottish Household Survey 2018</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">Shielding: a way forward for Scotland</a> - Scottish Government</li> <li>4. <a href="#">SG advice for those living with specific medical conditions</a></li> <li>5. SLAB’s <a href="#">applicants surveys</a></li> <li>6. <a href="#">LSS profile of the profession 2018</a></li> <li>7. <a href="#">SLAB civil solicitor survey</a></li> <li>8. <a href="#">Covid-19: economic impacts (SG)</a></li> <li>9. <a href="#">SLAB internal data on staff demographics</a></li> </ol>	<p>People with disabilities are more likely to experience ill-health from contracting COVID-19 than the general population, due to likelihood of pre-existing health conditions and poorer overall health (1). Monthly figures on deaths involving Covid-19 show that in over 90% of cases the deceased had at least one pre-existing condition (1). A large percentage of those in the shielding group will also be classified as disabled under the Equality Act. The Scottish Government have also issued advice to those who are not shielding but live with specific medical conditions, and (depending on their level of risk) may have to be “particularly careful not to become infected with coronavirus”. Many of these will be classified as disabled, for example those with cancer (non-shielding) or neurological conditions. (3,4)</p>

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. <a href="#">Inclusive Justice; Findings and recommendations</a> - EHRC, UK</li> <li>11. <a href="#">CLAO contact and client survey 2017</a></li> <li>12. CLAO research project on mental health and housing problems (not published)</li> <li>13. <a href="#">A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: delivery plan</a></li> <li>14. <a href="#">Gov UK on using a range of communication channels to reach disabled people</a></li> <li>15. <a href="#">Criminal Applicant Survey - Research Briefing and Topline Results</a></li> <li>16. <a href="#">How to support mental health at work</a></li> <li>17. <a href="#">Trauma informed care - Creating Safe Health Care Environments for Patients and Staff</a></li> <li>18. <a href="#">Diversity Guide - Disability</a></li> <li>19. <a href="https://onescotland.org/equality-themes/disability/">https://onescotland.org/equality-themes/disability/</a></li> <li>20. <a href="https://www.disabilityjustice.org.uk/take-action/physical-barriers/">https://www.disabilityjustice.org.uk/take-action/physical-barriers/</a></li> <li>21. <a href="#">PDSO Client survey 2017</a></li> </ol>	<p>COVID -19 risk will change over time with vaccination and variants.</p> <p>People with a physical or mental condition lasting for 12 months+ are less likely to use the internet. Scottish data from 2018 shows 73% used the internet, compared with 87% overall. The only age group in which there was no difference was 16-24 where usage was 100%. (2)</p> <p>In CLAO's most recent contact and client survey 43 per cent identified as having a disability - mainly reduced physical capacity, mental illness or physical co-ordination difficulties. (12) This compares to around one in five people in the Scottish population. (19)</p> <p>PDSO's most recent client survey shows 44% of PDSO clients declared long-standing illness, health problem or disability in the latest client survey. No specifics were available about conditions. From solicitors' experience during client contact mental illness is raised as a common condition. (21)</p> <p>Separately in a piece of CLAO research on the needs of clients with a mental health condition, 63 per cent indicated that they had such a condition. (13) SLAB's applicant surveys show that 54%</p>

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
		<p>of applicants for criminal legal aid (16) had a disability or limiting condition. For civil legal aid, 52% of respondents had a disability or limiting condition, 24% described it as a mental health problem and 25% as reduced physical capacity. (5) For the profession in general (including paralegals), the survey suggests 5% have a disability. (6) Of the respondents to SLAB’s civil solicitor survey, 4% declared they had a disability. Of the 75-80% of staff declaring their status, 15-20% of SLAB’s staff in 2019/20 had a disability or long term condition. (7)</p> <p>The design and layout of a space is important for both staff and other users of the premises, with other disabilities, for example people with visual, hearing or sensory impairments, cognitive impairments or learning disabilities, communication difficulties, mental health conditions, behavioural conditions. (19)</p> <p>Space for support workers/BSL interpreters in interview areas is needed. (10)</p> <p>Design/layout of the space should create an atmosphere of psychological safety for staff and clients of the service - positioning of furniture so people aren’t “cornered”, design and signage nudges people to behave in appropriate ways - reducing anxiety by only using physical barriers in a way which feels non-</p>

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
		<p>threatening and only using CCTV or other forms of surveillance where it is the only way to ensure client/staff safety. (18)</p> <p>Staff with some types of mental health disability may have needs for quiet space, others may prefer colleagues around them. (17)</p> <p>People with disabilities may benefit from communication in a range of formats and using inclusive language, also beneficial to other customers including to minority language users. We know from a recent Criminal Applicant survey that people with mental health problems found it more difficult to seek help and / or to engage with our service. (14,15)</p> <p>Physical barriers can include things like steps, stairways, kerbs, exterior surfaces and paving, parking areas, building entrances and exits (including emergency escape routes), internal and external doors, gates, toilets and washing facilities, public facilities (such as telephones, counters or service desks), lighting and ventilation, lifts and escalators, floor coverings, signs, furniture, and temporary or movable items (such as equipment and display racks). (20)</p>
Race	1. SLAB's applicants surveys	<p>The most commonly spoken languages at home other than English and Scots were (6):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Polish (54,186 people)</li> </ol>

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <a href="#">LSS profile of the profession 2018</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">SLAB civil solicitor survey</a></li> <li>4. <a href="#">Census results</a></li> <li>5. <a href="#">SLAB internal data on staff demographics</a></li> <li>6. <a href="#">Scotland's census - Languages</a></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Urdu (23,394 people)</li> <li>3. Punjabi languages (23,150 people)</li> <li>4. Chinese languages (16,830 people)</li> <li>5. French (14,623 people)</li> </ol> <p>SLAB's applicant surveys show that 97% of applicants for criminal legal aid were white (1% Polish and 2% other White) and 1% African, Caribbean or Black. (1)</p> <p>For civil legal aid, 87% of applicants were white (with 2% Polish and 3% other White) and 8% from other ethnic groups (2% any mixed or multiple ethnic groups, 2% African, Caribbean or Black). (1) For the profession in general (including paralegals), the survey suggests 4% identify themselves as being from a non-white ethnic group. (2)</p> <p>Of the respondents to SLAB's civil solicitor survey, 5% were from a non-white ethnic background. (3) The 2011 census tells us that <i>"The proportion of the population aged 3 and over reported as not being able to speak English well or at all was 1.4% overall, and 11% for those born outside the UK."</i> (4)</p> <p>Of the 75-80% of staff declaring their status for ethnicity, fewer than 5% are from a non-white minority ethnic groups. (5)</p>

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
Sex	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">SLAB's applicants surveys</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">LSS profile of the profession 2018</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">SLAB civil solicitor survey</a></li> <li>4. SLAB's administrative data (not published)</li> <li>5. <a href="#">SLAB internal data on staff demographics</a></li> <li>6. <a href="#">Trauma informed care - Creating safe health care environments for patients and staff</a></li> <li>7. <a href="#">Carers UK</a></li> <li>8. <a href="#">Carerpositive</a></li> </ol>	<p>SLAB's applicant surveys show that 74% of applicants for criminal legal aid were men. For civil legal aid, 64% of applicants were women. (1) Administrative data shows 59% of civil legal aid applicants were women. The figure for children's legal aid was 62%. In criminal legal aid, men made up 80% of applicants for summary legal aid, 89% for solemn legal aid and 90% in criminal appeals. (4)</p> <p>For the profession, data shows 53% of solicitors are women, with survey respondents for the wider profession (including paralegals) indicated that 61% identified as female. (2) Of the respondents to SLAB's civil solicitor survey, 53% were female. (3)</p> <p>All staff declared their sex; in 2019/20 there were more women (65%-70%) than men (30%-35%). (5)</p> <p>Women are more likely to be care givers than men. 58% of carers are women. (7) By the time they are aged 46, half of women have been a carer. Men have the same 50:50 chance by age 57. (8)</p> <p>Facilities need to be appropriate for those who may have experienced domestic abuse/ gender based violence, for example design of meeting space feels safe, space for support workers, availability of remote meetings, reception area safe, face to face</p>

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
		appointments staggered and drop ins managed, so that people do not have concerns about who they might come into contact with in waiting area. (6)
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">LSS profile of the profession 2018</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">Scottish Trans Gender Recognition</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">Article - creating gender neutral facilities</a></li> </ol>	<p>For the profession as a whole, 8 out of 2,376 respondents identified as transgender. (1)</p> <p>SLAB does not publish employee data due to low numbers. Transgender men or non-binary individuals can require access to sanitary products and waste disposal.(2)</p> <p>Gender neutral or private toilets can support people who identify as trans feel comfortable accessing relevant facilities. There should be floor to ceiling toilets. (3)</p>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">LSS profile of the profession 2018</a></li> </ol>	<p>For the profession as a whole, 91% of respondents described their sexual orientation as heterosexual or straight, 3% as gay man, 2% as bisexual and 1% as lesbian (n=20). Less than 1% of respondents preferred to use a different term or identified as pansexual or asexual.(1)</p>
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">LSS profile of the profession 2018</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">Religion or Belief and the workspace</a></li> </ol>	<p>Less than 1% of respondents described themselves as Jewish, Sikh, Hindu or Buddhist. 49% of respondents indicated that they did not belong to a religion, religious denomination or body. In addition, 25% described belonging to the Church or Scotland. (1)</p>

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
		<p>Based on 79% of SLAB employees responding, 45-50% stated no religion or belief, 45-50% described themselves as Christian, and &lt;5% from any other religion or belief.</p> <p>Prefer not to say was 15-20%. Space can be needed for prayer, and or storage of food to support employee or visitor religious requirements. (2)</p>
Pregnancy or maternity	<p>1. <a href="#">Continuing to breastfeed when you return to work</a></p> <p>2. CLAO experience (not published)</p>	<p>Under the Workplace (Health, safety and Welfare) regulations 1992, employers have the duty to provide appropriate space for breastfeeding and employees to rest. Employers should ensure that women have access to a private room where they can breastfeed or express milk, store expressed milk. (1)</p> <p>There can be a link with pregnancy and mobility issues, therefore some of the same considerations may apply as to disability.</p> <p>Providing baby changing facilities for customers is a consideration. (2)</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	<p>1. <a href="#">LSS profile of the profession 2018</a></p>	<p>Respondents most frequently indicated that they were married (59%), with 20% never married and never registered a same-sex civil partnership. Less than 1% of respondents were in a registered same-sex civil partnership. (1)</p>

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
<p><b>Care Experienced</b> <i>(corporate parenting duty)</i></p>	<p>1. <a href="#">Who Cares? Scotland</a>            2. <a href="#">Scottish Household Survey 2018</a>            3. SLAB's <a href="#">applicants surveys</a>            4. Children's Social Work Statistics 2018 - <a href="#">Additional Table 2.4</a></p>	<p>There is qualitative evidence of digital exclusion/lack of participation amongst care experienced people. For example, having no/insufficient devices or having to prioritise other bills over WiFi. (1) Before the pandemic care experienced people were already more likely to have a range of experiences/indicators linked to poverty. (1)</p> <p>In 2018 in Scotland 69% of households in the lowest income band had home internet access, compared with 99% in the highest income band. (2)</p> <p>For criminal legal aid, 21% of applicants had been or were currently looked after by a local authority. For civil legal aid, 5% of respondents had been or were currently looked after by a local authority. (3)</p> <p>In Scotland in 2018, 13% of 'looked after' children who had an outcome from their assessment were assessed as having a disability. This compares to 8% of all children in the UK 2017/18. (4)</p>

**2.2 Using the information above and your knowledge of the policy/practice/process/service, summarise your overall assessment of how important and relevant the policy/ practice/ process/ service is likely to be for equality groups.**

There is evidence that there is the potential for a number of direct and indirect impacts and opportunities across a range of protected characteristics for clients, staff or others as a result of the move.

**2.3 Outcome of step 2 and next steps. Complete the table below to inform the next stage of the EqIA process.**

Outcome of Step 2 following initial evidence gathering and relevance to equality characteristics	Yes/ No (Y or N)	Next steps
There is no relevance to equality or our corporate parenting duties	N	Proceed to Step 5: agree with decision makers that no EqIA is required based on current evidence
There is relevance to some or all of the equality groups and/or our corporate parenting duties	Y	Proceed to Step 3: complete full EqIA
It is unclear if there is relevance to some or all of the equality groups and/or our corporate parenting duties	N	Proceed to Step 3: complete full EqIA

**Step 3 - stakeholder involvement and consultation**

**3.1 Do you/did you have any consultation or involvement planned for this policy/practice/process/service?**

Yes

But this will be during 2021-22 and after the office move (see step 6).

**3.2 List all the stakeholder groups that you will talk to about this policy/practice/process/service.**

We are consulting solicitors, advice agencies and other agencies that we work with regarding how the new premises can assist them to access/provide services for groups of people with particular protected characteristics. There are some questions specifically for targeted providers. CLAO and PDSO will carry out a client/contact survey when volume of clients returning to the office are sufficient and views can be sought on clients' expectations/experiences of the new meeting space.

**3.3 What did you learn from the consultation/ involvement? Remember to record relevant actions in the assessment action log.**

Consultation about longer term use of the office space and longer term improvements to accessibility still to be completed.

## Step 4 - Impact on equality groups and steps to address these

You must consider the three aims of the general duty for each protected characteristic. The following questions will help:

- Is there potential for discrimination, victimisation, harassment or other unlawful conduct that is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010? How will this be mitigated?
- Is there potential to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who do not? How can this be achieved?
- Is there potential for developing good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not? How can this be achieved?

### 4.1 Does the policy/practice/process/service have any impacts (whether intended or unintended, positive or negative) on any of the equality characteristics?

Age	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impact	Negative impact	No impact	
potential for discrimination	X			<p>The new premises have level access to reception, work areas, meeting rooms and toilets. The new office has increased capacity for meetings for PDSO. The now dedicated meeting space is more accessible. The accessible toilet is close by but is accessed by a series of doors which will only close when triggered by a fire alarm (the escape route in the event of a fire is direct from the toilet to the fire escape without the requirement to return through those doors - see actions).</p> <p>The premises can be used for remote meetings (for example, online and by telephone) for those who are unable to access the premises physically, or who are more comfortable/familiar with accessing services in that way.</p>

				<p>Our workspaces have been made suitable for doing remote client meetings. New furniture is suitable for remote meetings from solicitors' desks and meeting rooms can also be booked on occasion for this purpose. We are also set up for remote working.</p> <p>For hard of hearing clients who attend the office, there is an induction loop installed.</p>
potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity	X			<p>Communication about the improvements to our service from the relocation has been communicated via our website. PDSO have created leaflets about the move for current clients that are going out in operational letter. CLAO has communicated with all clients about the office move via their preferred communication method.</p> <p>The configurability of the office means that it can be more easily adapted to allow measures which also improve COVID safety.</p>

Sex	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination	X			If people have caring responsibilities/can't access meetings in office because of gender based violence there is bookable space for remote interviews and appropriate measures so that interviews can be carried out from people's workstations.

				<p>We do not have childcare facilities at our premises. Conversations with solicitors may not be appropriate for children to hear. Protocols around having children in meeting rooms will be developed. Clients will be informed of those and will have the option of remote interviews where possible.</p> <p>We are working with the furniture we have to ensure that facilities are appropriate for those who may have experienced domestic abuse/ gender based violence - for example, furniture has been arranged in a way that is as welcoming as possible, blinds are fitted to ensure privacy, design of meeting space feels safe and there is space for support workers, as well as the availability of remote meetings. Priority will be given to those who need a larger meeting room for this reason. Protocols will be developed around how meeting space is allocated and laid out to allow these priorities to be taken account of.</p> <p>Some new furniture has been purchased which will be suitable for remote meetings from solicitors' desks.</p>
potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity	X			<p>Due to the difference in the proportion of men/women who each use PDSO and CLAO and potential nature of the cases each service will be dealing with we recognise the need to manage client interactions in the office/ waiting area where there could be risks, for example where we have both a person who has experienced and one who has been accused</p>

				of gender based violence using different services. See actions to develop protocols.
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Disability	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination	X			<p>The configurability of the office means that it can be more easily adapted to allow measures which improve COVID safety. Reduced levels of occupancy and increased cleaning are also in place.</p> <p>Facilities for clients to access appointments and staff to access meetings and hearings remotely are available. New furniture has been ordered which will ensure that workspaces are suitable for this and bookable space for this is also available in the office.</p> <p>The new premises are on one level, and doors to reception, some meeting rooms and toilets are at least 800mm so more accessible for those with limited mobility and for wheelchair users. The new premises are accessible by public transport and there is non-bookable, free on street disabled parking outside the office. There are also limited free private parking spaces available that could be used for clients and employees where needed for support with mobility/access. Priority can be given to people who need them because they need to bring a car to access the office due to a disability and/or who would otherwise struggle to afford to attend an interview. Car parking protocols will be put in place for using the spaces.</p>

			<p>There is also cycle parking nearby at Bridge Street, High Street, Townhouse, among other places. We will ensure that people are made aware of these facilities when attending appointments.</p> <p>For those for whom the costs of travel would be prohibitive or who are shielding due to covid-19 there are facilities for remote meetings. Meetings can be by telephone as well as online, for those who may be digitally excluded.</p> <p>Ability to offer appointments at office accessible by public transport, with free bookable parking or remotely by telephone or video calls means that there is a means of delivering service to people who may be financially and/or digitally excluded.</p> <p>The configurability means the design and layout can also take into account the needs of people, both staff and other users of the premises, depending on their needs. Appropriate aids can be provided at key areas, for example pictorial signs, there is a portable induction loop on site and facilities to accommodate guide dogs.</p> <p>There is space for support workers/BSL interpreters in some interview areas. Priority will be given when booking to people who need a bigger meeting room for this reason. This will be part of the discussion around protocols for booking meeting rooms. All internal doors are compliant with door openings over the minimum of 800mm.</p> <p>We are working with the furniture we have to ensure that the design/layout of the space can create an atmosphere of psychological</p>
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				<p>safety for staff and clients of the service - positioning of furniture so people aren't "cornered", design and signage that can nudge people to behave in appropriate ways - reducing anxiety by only using physical barriers in a way which feels non-threatening and only using CCTV or other forms of surveillance where it is the only way to ensure client/staff safety.</p> <p>Account will be taken of this in developing protocols around how meeting space is allocated and laid out.</p> <p>Consideration has been given to ensuring that there are different types of furniture, for example chairs with and without arms to suit people with different needs and desks with and without sound muffling screens.</p> <p>We have discussed with staff any requirements that they have around furniture and will ensure that the needs of staff with disabilities are prioritised in allocation of work space as staff begin to return to work in the office.</p>
potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity			X	

Gender Reassignment	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination			X	
potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity	X			There will be one accessible toilet available. Office has single toilets that are self contained and therefore all toilets will be gender neutral with appropriate signage and sanitary waste disposal units.

Race	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination	X			<p>Information about the office move is available on our CLAO and PDSO websites which can be translated into most languages.</p> <p>We will consider whether we require to translate any notices/leaflets in office into any of most commonly spoken languages in Highland and Islands, for example Polish, Romanian.</p> <p>Some interview rooms have space for interpreters. We can prioritise people that need a larger room for this reason when booking these rooms and that will be part of the discussion around office protocols.</p>

potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity	X			We are communicating with organisations who work with minority ethnic groups about the move to request their assistance in communicating with this group and seek information about how we can help them meet the needs of these groups will take place.

Religion or Belief	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination	X			Employees will be made aware that there is bookable space for private reflection or prayer (subject to business needs) and that other facilities can be provided if needed, for example dedicated fridge space to meet any religious dietary needs.
potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity			X	Have discussion with staff to understand their needs and work towards improving facilities where feasible.

Sexual Orientation	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination			X	
potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity			X	

Pregnancy & Maternity	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination	X			<p>A space will be identified during discussions around protocols for use of the office where breastfeeding or expressing milk can take place privately. Dedicated fridge space will also be available for storage of breast milk if required.</p> <p>Mobility issues which may be experienced in pregnancy are addressed under disability.</p>
potential for developing good relations			X	

potential to advance equality of opportunity	X			Baby changing facilities have been installed.
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Marriage & Civil Partnership	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination			X	
potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity			X	

Care experienced young people	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination	X			Care experienced people may be more likely to suffer digital exclusion. Telephone appointments are available. If people require face to face meetings there are interview rooms available and if people require support workers are able to attend face to face meetings some interview rooms are large enough to accommodate that. Priority in booking those rooms can be given to people who need

				<p>additional space for this reason. This will form part of the discussion around protocols for booking meeting rooms.</p> <p>The new premises are accessible by public transport and there are limited parking spaces available. Priority can be given to people who need them because they need to bring a car to access the office due to that being the only way they can attend an appointment and parking is not affordable for them.</p> <p>Measures taken to assist people with disabilities (see section on disability above) may also assist care experienced people who are more likely to live with a disability.</p> <p>The premises can be used for remote meetings for those who are unable to access the premises physically, or who are more comfortable/familiar with accessing services in that way. We have taken steps to ensure that workspaces are suitable for doing remote client meetings and meeting rooms can also be booked on occasion for this purpose.</p>
potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity	X			

**4.2 Describe how the assessment so far might affect other areas of this policy/practice/process/service and/or project timeline?**

The project was set up shortly before the move happened on 31 May/1June. Some practical matters required to take priority - finalising lease, arranging tender for and organising move, basic communication that the move is taking place to those who require to know, ensuring IT equipment is installed and contracts are terminated/transferred/renewed/entered into as appropriate.

Much of the work required regarding finalising all furnishings, layout, protocols for use of the premises and communications with external partners is ongoing and work continues after the move in date. Covid-19 is still a factor with some unknowns for returning to 'normal' office working and providing our usual office based client service. A corporate policy on returning to the workplace is in place.

**4.3 Having considered the potential or actual impacts of your policy/practice/process/service on equality groups, you should now record the outcome of this assessment below. Choose from one of the following (mark with an X or delete as appropriate):**

Please select (X)	Implications for the policy/ practice/ process/ service
	<p><b>No major change</b> Your assessment demonstrates that the policy/ practice/ process/ service is robust. The evidence shows no potential for unlawful discrimination and that you have taken all opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, subject to continuing monitoring and review.</p>
X	<p><b>Adjust the policy/ practice/ process/ service</b> You need to take steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality of to foster good relations. You have set actions to address this and have clear ways of monitoring the impact of the policy/ practice/ process/ service when implemented.</p>
	<p><b>Continue the policy/ practice/ process/ service with adverse impact</b></p>

	The policy/ practice/ process/ service will continue despite the potential for adverse impact. You have justified this with this assessment and shown how this decision is compatible with our obligations under the public sector equality duty. When you believe any discrimination can be objectively justified you must record in this assessment what this is and how the decision was reached.
	<b>Stop and remove the policy/ practice/ process/ service</b> The policy/ practice/ process/ service will not be implemented due to adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated.

## Step 5 - Discuss and review the assessment with decision makers and governance structures

### 5.1 Record details of the groups you report to about this policy/ practice/ process/ service and impact assessment.

Include the date you presented progress to each group and an extract from the minutes to reflect the discussion.

Discussion between SRO and equalities officer on 17 May 2021. Agreed would provide draft of this paper and project documentation. The paper was then taken forward at the project board or a sub-group of the project board.

- **March 2021 Project Board Meeting:** It was decided that an EqIA needs to be completed. A work stream would be added as an EQIA would be required to take into account what we do with the new premises.
- **April 2021 Project Board Meeting:** It was discussed whether there is a standard way of monitoring the equalities impacts. It was advised that there was an equality assessment template. The business case for this project also covered equalities and would act as a good starting point.
- **May 2021 Project Board Meeting:** An EqIA was drafted and a meeting arranged to discuss potential equalities issues. A draft was sent to the Corporate Policy Officer (Equalities). The EQIA would not be finalised for the move. However the accessibility information would need to be updated on the website. Work Stream: Ensure the impact on equalities of all decisions made by this project is considered, to make sure that we comply with PSED and SLAB policy. Ensure new premises comply with health and safety and equalities obligations.
- **June 2021 Project Board Meeting:** The EQIA had been discussed with the policy team and work had been done on the EQIA. Equality Officer had been invited to the project board to support project members considering the EQIA. The actions and monitoring would be for PDSO and CLAO to take forward after the EqIA was approved. It was agreed that a meeting would be arranged with a subgroup of the project board the following week to finalise aspects of the EQIA and

get a final draft for the project board to sign off. It was discussed that the EQIA should be finalised within the next month (end of July).

- **July 2021 Project Board Meeting:** The EQIA was agreed, subject to minor amendments. SRO to make amendment, tidy up document and pass to Director of Strategic Development for approval.
- **September 2021:** meeting with Director of Strategic Development, SRO and Project Manager took place. Director of Strategic Development requested further information regarding timescales for further work needed prior to review/accessibility survey of improvements in accessibility to the toilets.
- **October 2021 - February 2022:** exchanges of emails between SRO and Facilities regarding organising work
- **February 2022:** final draft circulated to Project Board members and Equalities Officer.
- **March 2022:** final draft to Chief Executive.

## Step 6 - Post-implementation actions and monitoring impact

**6.1 Record any ongoing actions below.** This can be copied from the project action log or elsewhere in this assessment and should include timescales and person/ team responsible. If there are no outstanding items please make this clear.

Action	Lead department/ individual	Deadline
To speak to groups/organisations who work with people with protected characteristics means that opportunities to advance equality of opportunity can be identified and acted on as appropriate. A survey of organisations/groups that we work with has been carried out including specific questions for those organisations/groups which sought to identify such opportunities. It also sought to identify ways in which our office space could be used to work collaboratively with those organisations/groups to support the provision of publicly funded legal services. The responses to this survey will be analysed and recommendations made for improvement.	CLAO	Two months.
A review will be carried out to determine if improvements can be made to the accessibility of the toilets for disabled staff and clients. An accessibility survey will be carried out by CLAO/PDSO to highlight any further improvements.	Facilities	Three months.

We will consider what other provision we can make for contacts and clients of our service who may require to bring children to the office as part of ongoing discussions around office protocols	CLAO and PDSO	Three months.
Once more frequent face to face scheduled and drop - in appointments are available, we will set protocols to manage appointments. This will mitigate risks and concerns people or we might have about who clients from each service may come into contact with in waiting areas.	CLAO and PDSO	Three months.
We will consider the positioning of CCTV cameras in meeting rooms.	CLAO and PDSO/Facilities	Three months.
CLAO and PDSO will carry out a client/ contact survey when volume of clients returning to the office are sufficient and views can be sought on clients' expectations/ experiences of the new meeting space.	CLAO and PDSO	When volumes of face to face appointments are sufficient to allow this.

**6.2 Note here how you intend to monitor the impact of this policy/ practice/ process/ service on equality groups.**

Measure	Lead department/ individual	Reporting (where/ frequency)
Record client equality characteristics at intake	CLAO and PDSO for respective services	Ongoing collation of relevant protected characteristics and reported at least annually for Manager meetings and used to inform policies and service delivery. Reference to in development of case management systems.
Record instances of communication support, reasonable adjustments or other requirement to	Reception/Admin team	Report on three monthly.

support clients (for example big meeting room, support worker, interpreter, remote appointment).		
CLAO/PDSO will seek info on an ongoing basis from contacts/ clients in geographical area which Inverness office serves about their experiences/requirements/expectations from the office.	CLAO and PDSO	After initial survey is carried out when volumes allow, this will be repeated on an at least two yearly cycle.
Ongoing CLAO survey of partners will seek info re requirements of groups with protected characteristics that they work with and ways in which their organisation could use premises to support the provision of publicly funded legal services.	CLAO	After the initial survey within six months and reported to the Executive Team. Follow up surveys will take place in two years.
Team check in to discuss how effective layout of space/ protocols are in effecting positive change and what other measures we may need to take.	CLAO and PDSO heads of office	Every three months via team meetings and reported to Head of CLAO/Director of PDSO.

**6.3 EqlA review date.** This EqlA should be reviewed as part of the wider post-implementation review of the policy/ practice/ process/ service. The date should not exceed 3 years from the policy/ practice/ process/ service implementation date.

30/09/2021 An initial review and stock take following the move took place.

30/06/2022 To review measures and plan surveys.



## **Step 7 - Assessment sign off**

All equality impact assessments must be signed off by the Chief Executive, even where an EqlA is not required. Note the relevant sign off date here:

16/03/2022

**Approved:** Colin Lancaster, Chief Executive

**Not approved:**