Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Template

Section 1: Details of the policy/practice/project

| **Information required** | **Enter information below** |
| --- | --- |
| Department/Team responsible | Future Working Group |
| Name of Policy, Practice or Project being assessed | Formalisation of Activity Based Hybrid Working model (currently in test phase) |
| Purpose and anticipated outcomes | Transferring the organisation from the hybrid approach that naturally evolved as part of the Covid pandemic to the activity based hybrid working model, suggested by the Future Working Group and approved for trial by the Senior Executive Team. |
| Is this a new or existing Policy, Practice or Project? | It is the formalisation of a working model that has been applied since the Covid 19 pandemic his the UK and impacted the way Scottish Forestry works. |
| List of participants in Equality Impact Assessment process | Bastian Altrock, FWCS Manager  Rachel Martin, Head of Corporate Comms  Rosie Ballantyne, Project Manager  Ella Hashemi, EDI Manager |
| Date Assessment started | 10/10/2022 |
| Completion date | 03/03/2023 |
| Who is likely to be affected?  *E.g. employees, visitors, contractors, women, men, young people, older people, people with disabilities etc.* | All employees |

Section 2: Collecting information

What evidence is available about the needs of relevant groups? Please consider demographic data, including census information, research, consultation and survey reports, feedback and complaints, case law, others knowledge and experience. Please refer to the list of evidence on the EqIA page of the intranet.

| **Details** | **%** | **Source of evidence** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Sex**  female  male    **Age**  aged 39 years and under  aged 40 and over    **Sexual Orientation**  Heterosexual/straight  Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual  Unspecified    **Race**  White British/Scottish/Northern Irish/Irish/English  Any other White background  Minority ethnicity    **Gender reassignment**  Yes  No  Unspecified    **Disability**  Yes  No  Unspecified    **Marital Status**  Single  Partner  Married or Civil Partnership  Divorced or Separated  Unspecified    **Religion**  Church of Scotland  Christian - Other  Other religion  Agnostic  Atheist or No religion  Unspecified  \* figure is <1% and has therefore been suppressed to protect anonymity | 53  47  30  70  49  4  47  89  3  3  0  60  40  6  89  5  30  9  50  8  3  7  9  \*  3  29  51 | Internal HR System/MI data report |

| **From your research above, if you have you identified any gaps in evidence, enter the details of the gaps below** |
| --- |
| We have a mechanism for staff to disclose their personal details under all of the protected characteristics (via Employee Self Service on the HR System), however disclosure rates for some protected characteristics are lower than others. We regularly encourage staff to keep their information up to date. See completing your diversity information on Saltire. |

| **As appropriate, please describe below, the consultation/engagement undertaken, including details of the groups involved and the methods used** |
| --- |
| * Throughout May- July 2022 the Future Working Group co-ordinated activity and opportunities for staff and leadership to engage and feed into the project. This included the following Insight sources and approaches:   + Digital Comment Box (May-July) - 59 comments   + Leadership Update (May 2022) – 75% of leaders   + All Staff Update (May 2022) – 75% of staff   + Staff survey (August 2021) – 84% of staff   + Reconnect Days\* (June/July 2022)   + Conservancy Workshops (June/July 2022)   + People Survey (Dec 2021)   + Room Booking System Analysis (Aug 2022)   + Future Working Project group insight   \* two reconnect days were cancelled due to peak in COVID numbers |

| **Detail below if there are any other groups to be consulted** |
| --- |
| * None for now |

Section 3: Impacts

Has the research and consultation identified any potential for impacts on those with the following protected characteristics:

| **Protected Characteristic** | **Potential Impact (yes or no)** | **Explain** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Age**  *E.g. older people, children, young people* | No | There is no evidence that age plays a role in the success of adoption of this hybrid working model. Anecdotal assumptions are made that older colleagues could struggle more with technology, no evidence to that effect has been found and some research suggests this may be an outdated assumption and the opposite may be true [in some cases](https://www.worklife.news/technology/myth-buster-young-workers-are-not-tech-savvy-in-the-workplace-and-its-a-growing-problem/). Our digital business partner undertook a brief technology use assessment which can be found in Appendix 1, page 9. |
| **Disability** | Yes | Positive change.  As no changes were made to the existing offices, and the assumption is that the private home of a person with some types of disabilities is better equipped to enable them to work than their workplace, the ability to stay at home may provide positive effects. In a staff survey in August 2021 where 84% of staff responded, 12 members of staff stated that hybrid working helps them manage their disability better.  Activity Based Working also gives neurodiverse staff the opportunity to select the best location to support their needs, with one member of our team noting their preference is to come into the office to better focus, when staff generally report focussed work is better done in a quiet home environment.  However, we are also aware that lone working and isolation can exacerbate some mental health conditions. Whilst the hybrid model allows staff more flexibility over where they work, we will continue to support any reasonable adjustment process in line with the Equality Act and following our guidelines for doing so. For activities taking place in a third location (not work or home) and online leaders will be advised as part of the guidance to take accessibilities needs into consideration when choosing the location as they would have done previously for days out or out of office events. |
| **Gender reassignment**  *Where a person is living as a different gender to that at birth* | No | It is not expected, and there is no evidence that the new model will directly impact on individuals/groups due to gender reassignment. |
| **Pregnancy and maternity** | Yes - positive | The move to this model and accompanying ability to spend more time at home and have more flexibility around necessary appointments / medical needs / access to medical facilities is assumed to have a positive impact only. We have already observed greater flexibility enjoyed and increased involvement and career options / ability to work more hours when childcare needs during maternity are considered. |
| **Race, ethnicity, colour, nationality or national origins**  *Including gypsies or travellers, refugees or asylum seekers* | No | It is not expected, and there is no evidence that the new model will directly impact on individuals/groups due to race, ethnicity, colour, nationality or national origins. |
| **Religion or belief**  *Including non-belief* | Yes | Positive. As the new guidance will outline, team leaders are expected to discuss with their teams the type of activities they conduct and the times they want to do that at. That discussion might provide more ability from our teams to openly discuss needs such as religious or caring requirements, child care needs or other asks on their time that the team could take into consideration and build this model around where appropriate. And together with our flexi model, it will further increase our team’s ability to find a work / life balance that works for them. |
| **Sex/Gender** | Yes | Positive. There is already evidence in the organisation that the increased flexibility of hybrid working provides more opportunities to women with childcaring responsibilities – in one of our conservancies, the ability to work from home allows a new mother the ability to come back after maternity on more hours than previously expected as she can spend some working time at home, allowing her to balance work and childcare needs better.  There has been some thought given to the gender divides in a particular role: case officers – this roles may be required to be in the office more than others as they do a lot of ‘physical tasks’, i.e. tasks that can only be done at the office. The data across our organisation shows that this role is fulfilled by a woman in 81.4% of cases and by men in 18.6% of cases.  Due to the potential danger of indirect discrimination, we undertook a consultation with Office Managers (who manage the roles in questions) and asked them for both the theory of role expectation as well as the practice of actual time spent in the office. In general there was an agreement that the role of Case Support Office performs more tasks that may require physical presence in the office in theory. When investigating the practice however, all but one office reported that people come in on a similar patterns / amount of time across the organisation and in some cases that other roles actually spend more time in the office than the one we looked at. We therefore do not believe there is any inadvertent gender discrimination going on but we will closely monitor this area going forward. The potential for discrimination based on role (rather than gender) is further being looked at from a digitalisation perspective as a lot of the physical tasks CSOs are required to do in the office are due to systems that are currently under review, e.g. wet signatures and physical filing. |
| **Marriage and civil partnership** | No | It is not expected, and there is no evidence that the new model will directly impact on individuals/groups due to marriage and civil partnership. |
| **Sexual Orientation** | No | It is not expected, and there is no evidence that the new model will directly impact on individuals/groups due to sexual orientation. |

Is there any evidence that the policy may result in any less favourable treatment, discrimination, harassment or victimisation as detailed below:

| **Potential outcome of the policy** | **Delete as appropriate** | **If yes, give details of the potential outcome and any project modifications to mitigate the risk** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Result in less favourable treatment for particular groups | No evidence | There is no evidence as of yet. In some work groups concerns have been raised by individuals, that the choice and expressed opinion and preference of location (home / office / third location) may be at odds with the superiors preference and therefore disadvantage their career / performance ratings – however, this was not specific to any particular group under the protected characteristics above, more of a general observation. In the Activity Based Working guidance, a toolkit is made available to managers and staff alike that will allow for an impartial, objective process to be followed to determine the most effective work location for every activity. Guidance also includes links to support frameworks such as flexible working and reminders to avoid bias and personal preference. |
| Give rise to direct or indirect discrimination | No evidence | Again there is no evidence but it may be noted that if a location is chosen for a particular activity that is hard to access for someone with a disability or someone pregnant, that may disadvantage them as they may chose not to attend and miss out on face to face interaction. Again leaders will be advised to take that into account when making location / activity decisions and this advise is included in our Activity Based Working guidance alongside feedback loops that allow the team to report back directly to the Future Working team and advise on how to make digital meetings more inclusive, incl. guidance on how to support people with certain disabilities. |
| Give rise to unlawful harassment or victimisation | No evidence | No evidence to that effect has come to light or is expected to arise from the changes this model makes. The guidance provides a toolkit to make the determination of work location as objective as possible and we have processes in place via our feedback loops (incl. anonymous feedback) as well as our regular HR guidance covering our harassment policy on Saltire. |

Section 4: Meeting our General Equality Duty

| **Enter below which aspects of the Policy, Practice or Project seek to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation** |
| --- |
| SF is committed to the elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. While the purpose of the ABHW model is not around elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation, inclusion is implicit throughout and there is evidence that increased home working, [can have inclusion benefits](https://www.irishtimes.com/special-reports/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/shift-to-home-working-enables-greater-inclusivity-1.4700521#:~:text=Shift%20to%20home%20working%20enables%20greater%20inclusivity%20Move,we%20need%20to%20be%20striving%20for%20work%2Flife%20harmony.). |

| **Enter below which aspects of the Policy, Practice or Project seek to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not** |
| --- |
| As mentioned above, there is [growing evidence](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/07/inclusive-hybrid-working-model/) that home and/or hybrid working can increase inclusivity if done right, and that includes some of these protected groups. We will for example take some neurodiversity needs as well as accessibility needs into account for our future office design and estate strategy which goes hand in hand with the way we work. When it comes to the technology we use, accommodations can and are being made for people with accessibility needs and the organisation has already learnt much in this space over the last two years. |

| **Enter below which aspects of the Policy, Practice or Project seek to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not** |
| --- |
| As outlined previously in this document, the guidance for activity based working requires leaders to facilitate discussions with their teams across the organisation about when and where work is being done. By sharing some work life balance requirements, some people can find alliance in others sharing similar requirements and those will be brought to the forefront and incorporated where possible. Our staff are generally very aware of aspects of fairness and our leaders are encouraged to explore all areas where any group in particular is disadvantaged, and especially our Conservators have been vocal here and some previous consultation has highlighted that we are an open organisation where perceived disadvantages can be discussed and overcome. Activity based working, out of all the models we have considered is the one that allows our staff the most flexibility between home and work life and it is the preferred model as indicated by surveys and consultations we have done in the past – everyone has the same opportunity / power over when and where they work, within the boundaries of business needs, and no personal circumstance should therefore make anyone feel begrudging towards another or disadvantaged because of life circumstance. Again, of course in individual circumstance, a flexible working agreement is still an option and that is highlighted in the guidance and again equally available to anyone.  Ongoing engagement with the team from the FW Group, continued updating and revising of the guidance, continued engagement with the leaders and keeping the topic on the agenda is the best approach to foster ideal relationships between all involved, which is why the roles of FW Manager is permanent and not a temporary project as that work will go on and on.  Furthermore the project team have opened two different feedback channels, one open, one anonymous for our staff to comment on / feed back any issues they might experience with either the guidance, the above mentioned exercise or activity based working in general – staff are actively and repeatedly encouraged to feed back what is working, what is not working and also where they struggle.  Leaders are asked to create space in team meetings to discuss activity based working regularly, are asked to share what they are experimenting with and how it is going and to actively engage with individuals that may not embrace the trial fully and to find out why they struggle to do so – that will help identify potential issues in the team and open communication and discussion as well as leader’s support should be sufficient to resolve them. The anonymous feedback in particular will be a good failsafe for this.  We have also got support planned for leaders on hybrid leadership as well as planning and open discussion forum for all things activity based working where leaders can share and ask questions about how to overcome potential stumbling block.  One aspect that may further help foster good relationships between people is the actual office design, where we hope in future we can allow for different work spaces for people with differing needs to that the environment can work in tandem with their individual requirement, such as for example providing quiet spaces for people who prefer working in silence or sound proof booth for people who conduct rather loud teams calls and may disturb others. This aspect will be part of our forthcoming estate strategy and put into practice, ideally for our first office move from Silvan House. |

Section 5: Outcome of the assessment

| **Outcome of the assessment on the Policy, Practice or Project** | **Enter detail below** |
| --- | --- |
| **No major change** | As outlined above, the mitigation we undertake in the form of leadership and team guidance on how to be inclusive when choosing activities and locations will be sufficient and no major change to the policy is necessary. |
| Adjust the Policy, Practice or Project |  |
| Continue to Policy, Practice or Project |  |
| Stop and remove the Policy, Practice or Project |  |

| **Detail below recommendations, including action required, to address any negative impacts identified** |
| --- |
| As part of Phase 2 of the Future Working Project, several feedback loops and stakeholder engagement forums are being set up and facilitated that should enable the project team to collect valid and useful feedback. If anything from that feedback needs to be considered in a future EQIA, it will be done on review. |

Section 6: Monitoring

| **Describe below how you will monitor the impact of this Policy, Practice or Project**  *E.g. performance indicators used, other monitoring arrangements, who will monitor progress, criteria used to measure achievement of outcomes etc.* |
| --- |
| This document will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Future Working Group and its principles will form and important part of any inclusion considerations. Issues to be highlighted in working group sessions and reported to Equality & Diversity Manager as well as the FW project lead. Our guidance document will also be updated on a regular basis, taking all EQIA related feedback into account. |

| **When and how is the Policy, Practice or Project due to be reviewed?** |
| --- |
| This will be reviewed 6 months from sign off and if and when a more permanent model for future working will be introduced. |

Section 7: Sign off

| **Required information** | **Enter information below** |
| --- | --- |
| Date sent to Equality and Diversity Manager | 10/10/22 |
| Comments from Equality and Diversity Manager | 10/10/22 |
| Date signed off by Equality and Diversity Manager | 22/2/23 |

| **Details of Senior Manager who has signed off this Equality Impact Assessment** | **Enter information below** |
| --- | --- |
| Name | Zahid Deen |
| Title | Head of Operational Services & Transformation |
| Date approved | 3/3/23 |

**APPENDIX 1**

Technology Use Assessment, Scottish Forestry November 2022

Lynne Wilson, Digital Business Partner

Given the diversity of the technical and digital abilities of SFs staff, emerging technologies and an increased reliance on digital tools to support not only our future working plans but also to adopt modern working practices for the digital age, will have both a positive and negative impact for all our staff - regardless of age. This is why we intend focus our efforts to mitigate the negatives and promote the positives of the use of such solutions. This is at the forefront of our digital plans for the coming months. By engaging a wide demographic throughout the business we will put the users in centre of our service offerings, which will produce a tool kit for SF to draw on to support their activities. Rather than purely a prescriptive set of tools we will provide a framework of apps, clearly defining use cases and options for the users to select the methods they feel confident will meet their needs. The tools we are selecting, developing and deploying we are aiming to ensure that appropriate support is available to all staff. This will be delivered as improved guidance, tailored training and support; the aim being to provide upskilling opportunities both remotely and in person. This flexible approach will allow staff to develop their abilities in a way they feel most comfortable with and will be most beneficial to them.

The key is understanding our staff’s perceptions of technology is important to assist with introducing/embedding it in the organisation and maximize the potential of technology to support our future working plans.

Most studies around the disadvantages of digital for “older people” focus on the following themes:

1. The use of touch screen digital tools, focusing on the responsiveness and interacting with these devices – our only current offerings in this area is the use of COPS managed mobile devices and tablets, these are not considered an essential tool for all staff and we would provide support, training and guidance as part of our plans outlined above.
2. Lack of knowledge of tools and functionality – this again should be mitigated by our plans outlined above. It is our intention to tailor this to meet the needs of the staff and ensure they get the support required and it be delivered in a means that will best help build knowledge and self-confidence of the user.
3. Health barriers – we are required to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to support these users. A number of tools are potentially available to be deployed to these individuals to ease or fully resolve these barriers.
4. Unsolicited contact – the tools we will be deploying will not increase the risk of this to users
5. Security concerns – the tools we will be deploying will be required to meet the required security standards outlined by SG, FLS and SF security policies. As such we hope to minimise the risk.
6. The social impact – our proposals under future working are that these digital tools are there to support and complement practices. We would be continuing to encourage face to face interactions and networking where appropriate.
7. Unwillingness to adopt – this is the most difficult disadvantage to address. We can run change management programmes, provide support and training, however, there will potentially be some who are unwilling to accept the change. I would stress from the conversations that I’ve been having so far, I am hopeful that this will not be a big hurdle for us.

On the other hand these studies generally found that majority participants were keen to adopt new technology provided they would be given the learning and support they would need to interact with it.