

# Equality Impact Assessment

## Summary

<b>Name of Policy or practice</b>	Shared Parental Leave		
<b>New Policy or Revision</b>	Revised		
<b>Policy Owner (role)</b>	Head of Human Resources		
<b>Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion</b>	January 2025		
<b>Agreed Schedule Review Date</b>	January 2028	<b>Additional review date (Action review date)</b>	N/A

## 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.

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 <b>monitor the implementation of policy and the impact on equality groups</b> (evidence and consultation)			<b>[ONGOING RECORD]</b>
Review on a quarterly basis of employment law, case law and legislative changes, and equalities updates (including reviewing EHRC website)	HR Shared Services Manager	BAU	Ongoing
Review and assess on an annual basis all SQA employee lifecycle data	People Analytics, Governance & Systems Manager	BAU	Ongoing

## Policy Aims

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

The stated aims of the SQA Shared Parental Leave (SPL) Policy are to:

- enable eligible parents to choose how to share the care of their child during the first year of birth or adoption.
- give parents more flexibility in considering how to best care for and bond with their child.
- provide support and time off for parental responsibilities.

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

The *Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014* led to the UK Government introducing SPL in 2015 to offer choice to eligible parents when it comes to childcare and allow mothers to return to work sooner if they wish to. The policy benefits employers who can retain talent in their workforce and can contribute to closing their gender pay gap.

[Personnel Today](#) (2024) reported an increasing uptake of SPL where 24,700 people claimed SPL in 2023-24 compared to only 13,00 people in 2020 -21.

Since this policy has been introduced, as part of a legislation requirement, there has been minimal uptake with only four instances of staff using SPL. However, up until 2021, there was only one uptake of SPL and from 2023-24, there have been three requests. SQA's data mirrors the reported increase of SPL uptake by Personnel Today, however, the numbers are still low.

We therefore conclude:

- (i) There is a nonexistent data sample relating to the use of this policy in SQA.
- (ii) It is not possible to draw any meaningful conclusions in respect of Equality Impact.

**National Evidence:**

A 2023 UK Government [report](#) revealed that only 1% of eligible mothers and 5% of eligible fathers or partners took SPL. Additionally, a 2024 study by [Bath University](#) which used data from more than 40,000 households in the UK found that SPL has not affected the number of fathers taking leave, nor the length of leave they take.

Research by economists from the Economics Department and [Institute for Policy Research](#) (IPR) at the University of Bath and Cardiff University in 2024 made three key recommendations to increase uptake of SPL:

1. Improve the financial terms: UK maternity leave is already among the worst paid in the OECD, and SPL's pay is even lower. If families are going to use SPL, the financial incentives need to be better.
2. Simplify the system and provide legal support: The current system is too complicated and hard to navigate. Pairing SPL with legal support for both parents and employers could help.
3. Loosen eligibility criteria: The strict rules around how long parents have to work for the same employer and how much they earn are making it hard for some to qualify. Easing these restrictions could encourage more dads to take leave.

The new Labour Government's committed to reviewing the parental leave system within its first year in office which may affect the uptake in the future.

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

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

- enable eligible parents to choose how to share the care of their child during the first year of birth or adoption.
- give parents more flexibility in considering how to best care for, and bond with, their child.
- provide support and time off for parental responsibilities.

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.

The following SQA policies are also related to the Shared Parental Leave Policy:

- Adoption Leave
- Attendance Management
- Compassionate Leave
- Flexible Working
- Maternity Leave
- Parental Leave
- Paternity Leave
- Staff Leave Policy

#### **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 compound discrimination or intersectionality i.e., where a person has one or more characteristics and may be subjected to consequentially greater levels of disadvantage.
- Have greater difficulties following or complying with the written requirements of a workplace policy e.g., following process and following a reporting flowchart etc.
- Feel less comfortable discussing their circumstances with people of the opposite Sex.

**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 with in the development of this policy or practice?

*This policy has been developed in consultation with SQA's recognised Trades Unions, Unite and Unison, and in line with SQA Recognition Agreement.*

In addition, as this is an internal policy, SQA has asked for feedback from internal employee network groups in relation to equality impacts groups. These employee network groups 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.

## 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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>993</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>1036</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>11.04%</b>

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](#)

## 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.

## Race

**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.

**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.

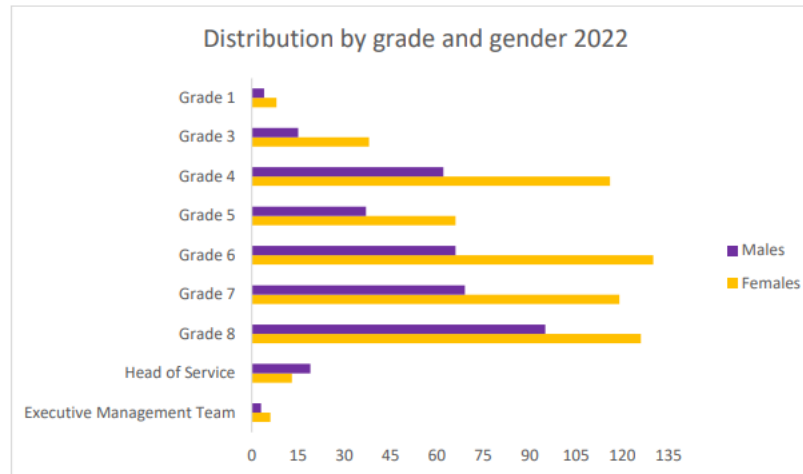
Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2021-23

[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/>

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Table 10.1: Sexual orientation</b>								
	<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>2019 number</b>	<b>2019%</b>	<b>2020 number</b>	<b>2020%</b>	<b>2021 number</b>	<b>2021%</b>	<b>2022 number</b>	<b>2022%</b>
	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%
<b>Gender Reassignment (Gender identity and transgender)</b>	Table 10.1 shows the composition of staff sexual orientation within the organisation for the period 2019 to 2022.								
	<p>Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2021-23  <a href="#">Equalities: SQA workforce monitoring report 2021-23</a></p>								
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](#)

**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  <a href="#">Equalities: SQA workforce monitoring report 2021-23</a></p>
<b>Care experience (where relevant)</b>	SQA does not currently collect Care Experience data.

## 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
	<p><b>Risks of Discrimination – Direct and Indirect:</b></p> <p>This policy provides clear guidance for SQA employees with the aim of allowing eligible parents to choose how to share the care of their child during the first year of birth or adoption. For workers meeting this criteria, the policy should have a positive impact on people of all ages. We do however acknowledge that statistically, younger women are more likely to have children than older women (the average age at which a woman became a mother in 2023 was 32).</p> <p>In 2022, a total of 2.5% of colleagues in SQA were pregnant - 26 people. Whilst these colleagues are not spread evenly across the full age demographic of the SQA population, access to the policy and its benefits are not, in any way, restricted by age.</p> <p><b>Positive Impact Recorded.</b></p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>The policy and the legislation that it is based on, is intended to be beneficial to those caring for a child during the first year of birth or adoption, regardless of age. As stated above, this policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enables eligible parents to choose how to share the care of their child.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to give parents more flexibility in considering how to best care for, and bond with, their child</li> <li>• provide support and time off for parental responsibilities.</li> </ul> <p>The policy provides equality of opportunity to eligible employees regardless of their age.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Foster good relations</p> <p>There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between employees of different age. No further recommendations are made in respect of this at this stage.</p>
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Disability</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>Equality Risks:</p> <p>This policy provides clear guidance for SQA employees with the aim of allowing eligible parents to choose how to share the care of their child during the first year of birth or adoption. For workers meeting this criteria, the policy should have a positive impact on people with or without a disability.</p> <p>SQA currently has a workforce of 8.01% who have declared they have a disability. This policy may present a barrier for disabled employees in the form of accessibility or greater difficulties following policy and procedure. However, support and guidance is available for all employees from HR Shared Service, as it is for all SQA policies and procedures.</p> <p>The uptake on this policy is low (four employees since the policy was implemented) therefore it is difficult to identify any trend around those using the policy and disability.</p> <p>The SQA Shared Parental Leave policy enables the organisation to adhere to The Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014. The terms and conditions stipulated in the policy are those of the legislation.</p> <p><b>Positive Impact Recorded.</b></p>

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Advance equality of opportunity</b></p> <p>As previously advised the aim of this policy is to allow parents to choose how to share the care of their child during the first year of birth or adoption. The policy also allows for discontinuous blocks of leave. We anticipate this will have a positive impact on parents who have declared a disability, giving them greater flexibility in taking time out of the workplace to care for their child and for parental responsibilities.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Foster good relations</b></p> <p>There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between employees with a disability. However, by allowing partners to share leave to care for their child, this may help foster good relations as the leave following the placement/birth is available to both partners. This ability to choose should have a positive impact on colleagues. This is covered in the policy as stated below:</p> <p><i>“if you are raising a family, you have a statutory right to time off work (paid and unpaid). We want to ensure you can easily find the appropriate information about time off work and our associated procedures and allowances. We value you and have developed entitlements for time off to support you with parental responsibilities.”</i></p>
<p><b>Protected Characteristic</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>General Equality Duty</b></p>
<p><b>Race</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>The Shared Parental Leave policy can be utilised by SQA colleagues regardless of their race. There have only been four requests under the scheme in SQA since its creation, so there is no statistically significant data to show any trend around the use of this policy and race.</p> <p>SQA’s Shared Parental Leave policy enables the organisation to adhere to The Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014. The terms and conditions stipulated in the policy are those of the legislation.</p> <p><b>Risks of Discrimination – Direct and Indirect:</b></p> <p>This policy can be utilised by all eligible SQA employees – irrespective of race.</p>



	<p>We can identify no reasonable risks (national or local) to indicate how or why this policy could disproportionately impact a person on the grounds of this 'Protected Characteristic.'</p> <p><b>Neutral Equality related impact is therefore recorded in this area.</b></p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>All SQA employees from all races are entitled to use, access and be subjected to <i>the</i> Shared Parental Leave Policy. There is no empirical evidence to indicate that this policy affects employees differently or less favourably, on the grounds of their race.</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
	<p>There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between employees of different Races. No further recommendations are made in respect of this at this stage.</p>
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>The Shared Parental Leave policy can be utilised by SQA colleagues regardless of religion or belief although we acknowledge that certain cultures may not necessarily consider shared parental responsibilities as a social norm.</p> <p>As noted, only four requests for SPL have been made since the scheme's creation at SQA meaning there is no statistically significant data to show any trend around the religion / belief profile of those using the policy.</p> <p>The SQA Shared Parental Leave policy enables the organisation to adhere to The Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014. The terms and conditions stipulated in the policy are those of the legislation.</p> <p><b>Risks of Discrimination – Direct and Indirect:</b></p> <p>This policy can be utilised by all eligible SQA employees – irrespective of <i>Religion / Belief</i>.</p>

	<p>We can identify no reasonable risks (national or local) to indicate how or why this policy could disproportionately impact a person on the grounds of this 'Protected Characteristic.'</p> <p><b>Neutral Equality related impact is therefore recorded in this area.</b></p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>All SQA employees from all Religions / Beliefs are entitled to use, access and be subjected to the Shared Parental Leave Policy.</p> <p>There is no empirical evidence to indicate that this policy affects employees differently or less favourably, on the grounds of their Religion or Philosophical Belief System.</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
	<p>There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between employees of different religions or beliefs. No further recommendations are made in respect of this at this stage.</p>
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Sex</b>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p><b>Risks of Discrimination</b></p> <p>The Shared Parental Leave policy can be utilised by SQA colleagues regardless of sex.</p> <p>SQA's Shared Parental Leave policy enables the organisation to adhere to The Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014. The terms and conditions stipulated in the policy are those of the legislation.</p> <p>Equality Risks:</p>

This policy provides clear guidance for SQA employees with the aim of allowing eligible parents to choose how to share the care of their child during the first year of birth or adoption. For workers meeting this criteria, the policy should have a positive impact on people of both sex.

**Positive Impact Recorded.**

Advance equality of opportunity

The policy and the legislation that it is based on, is intended to be beneficial to those caring for a child during the first year of birth or adoption, regardless of sex.

Enabling parents to choose how they access parental leave rather than have it dictated to them based on gender-based bias around who is expected to care for a child is a positive action in advancing equality of opportunity based on sex.

Foster good relations

There is evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between employees of different sexes. The policy allows employees of either sex to choose a parental leave balance that suits their needs.

The policy states:

“We recognise that if you are raising a family, you have a statutory right to time off work (paid and unpaid). We want to ensure you can easily find the appropriate information about time off work and our associated procedures and allowances. We value you and have developed entitlements for time off to support you with parental responsibilities. We have set out your rights and responsibilities, developing the policy in line with the Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014”.

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><b>Risks of Discrimination</b></p> <p>The Shared Parental Leave policy was introduced to parents (whether by birth, adoption, or surrogacy) the right to share up to 50 weeks leave. SQA's shared parental leave is eligible to all employees regardless of their <i>Sexual Orientation</i>. This can be shown in the policy under definitions where its states:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother/adoptive parent is either the mother who gives birth to a child or the person who is eligible for adoption leave and/or pay.</li> <li>• Partner is the child's biological father or the partner of the mother/adoptive parent. This can be a spouse, civil partner, or the partner who is living in an enduring relationship with the mother/adoptive parent of the child (man or women).</li> </ul> <p>We can identify no reasonable risks (national or local) to indicate how or why this policy could disproportionately impact a person on the grounds of <i>Sexual Orientation</i>.</p> <p><b>Neutral Equality related impact is therefore recorded in this area.</b></p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	All SQA employees are entitled to use, access and be subjected to the Shared Parental Leave Policy 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> .
	Foster good relations
	This policy does foster good relations in respect of <i>Sexual Orientation</i> as it is open to all couples (same and opposite sex).

	<p>SQA's Rainbow Network exists to ensure that SQA is a workplace that promotes, embraces, and welcomes LGBTI+ diversity, dignity, inclusion, and talents. In practice, the Rainbow Network discusses LGBT+ issues, shares resources, and organises events such as awareness-raising campaigns and charity fundraising days. SQA will continue to promote Shared Parental Leave and the benefits of the policy.</p>
<p><b>Protected Characteristic</b></p>	<p><b>General Equality Duty</b></p>
<p><b>Gender Reassignment (Gender identity and transgender)</b></p>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p><b>Risks of Discrimination</b></p> <p>The <i>Equality Act 2010</i> protects employees against discrimination 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"> <li>▪ Proposing to undergo a Gender transition.</li> <li>▪ Undergoing the process of Gender transitioning.</li> <li>▪ As a result of Gender transition.</li> </ul> <p>We can identify no reasonable risks (national or local) to indicate how or why this policy could disproportionately impact a person on the grounds of <i>Gender Reassignment</i>.</p> <p><b>Neutral Equality related impact is therefore recorded in this area.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Advance equality of opportunity</p> <p>SQA has a Gender Identity and Transitioning at Work policy protecting these colleagues.</p> <p>Whilst, with the exception of <i>Gender Reassignment</i>, there is currently no legal obligation placed on the SQA to</p>

	<p>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 SQA).</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
	<p>There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between people of different <i>Gender Identities</i> or who are LGBTQ+.</p>
<p><b>Protected Characteristic</b></p>	<p><b>General Equality Duty</b></p>
<p><b>Marriage/Civil Partnership</b></p>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p>
	<p><b>Risks of Discrimination:</b></p> <p>We can identify no reasonable risks (national or local) to indicate how or why this policy could disproportionately impact a person on the grounds of this ‘Protected Characteristic.’</p> <p><b>Neutral Equality related impact is therefore recorded in this area.</b></p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>All SQA employees are entitled to use, access and be subjected to the Shared Parental Leave Policy 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> <p><b>The policy contains no language that states or implies that its application is in any way linked to marital status of colleagues.</b></p>

	<b>Foster good relations</b>
	<p>There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between employees of different Marital Status.</p> <p>No further recommendations are made in respect of this in relation to this policy.</p>
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Pregnancy / Maternity</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>Please refer to the separate SQA policies – <i>Maternity Leave Policy, Paternity Leave Policy, and Adoption Policy.</i></p> <p>The Shared Parental Leave policy can be utilised by SQA colleagues caring for a child during the first year of birth or adoption. As stated above this</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enables eligible parents to choose how to share the care of their child.</li> <li>• to give parents more flexibility in considering how to best care for, and bond with, their child</li> <li>• provide support and time off for parental responsibilities.</li> </ul> <p>This policy is beneficial to colleagues who are likely to have been recently covered by the provisions of the Maternity, Paternity or Adoption Policies. It is possible that somebody looking to access the benefits of the Shared Parental Leave Policy will do so after accessing benefits from the Maternity, Paternity or Adoption Policies.</p> <p>SQA’s Shared Parental Leave policy enables the organisation to adhere to The Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014. The terms and conditions stipulated in the policy are those of the legislation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Advance equality of opportunity</b></p> <p>All SQA employees are entitled to use, access and be subjected to the Shared Parental Leave Policy. The intention of the policy is to positively impact colleagues caring for a child during the first year of birth or adoption. It is likely to be beneficial to those who have recently experienced <i>Pregnancy/Maternity.</i></p>

	<b>Foster good relations</b>
	There is no evidence to indicate that this policy currently fosters good relations between employees that are Pregnant or on Maternity.
<b>Considered by SQA</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Care experience (where relevant)</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	All SQA employees are entitled to use, access and be subjected to the Shared Parental Leave Policy and there is no evidence to indicate that this policy could affect employees differently or less favourably, on the grounds of Care Experience.  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.
	<b>Advance equality of opportunity</b>
	All SQA employees are entitled to use, access and be subjected to the Shared Parental Leave Policy and there is no evidence to indicate that this policy could affect employees differently or less favourably, on the grounds of Care Experience.
	<b>Foster good relations</b>
	No evidence identified.