

Box 1: Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

EqIA aims to anticipate the effects of a plan on different groups within the community (equality target groups). A key driver for EqIA is the Equality Act 2006, which places statutory obligations on public sector organisations to ensure that all equality groups are not discriminated against within public sector service delivery and employment. The forthcoming Single Equality Bill 2009, a new streamlined public sector equality duty, is due to replace existing race, disability and gender equality duties and will be extended to cover all strands of discrimination, including measures to tackle socio-economic disadvantage.

Guidance on EqIA suggests a six-stage process²³³ that very closely matches the SA process.

There are eight identified equality target groups, or equality strands, that are central to the equality agenda: race; gender; disability; sexual orientation; gender reassignment; age; religion and or belief; socio-economic disadvantage.

Box 2: Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is an approach that ensures decision making at all levels considers the potential impacts of decisions on health and health inequalities. It identifies actions that can enhance positive effects and reduce or eliminate negative effects. HIA is a relatively new tool, and although there is no single agreed national approach or methodology, the value of HIA is increasingly being recognised, both nationally and internationally.²³⁴

HIA has been successfully integrated into the statutory process of SA and SEA undertaken for regional, sub-regional and local planning policy. In these instances the health input into policies has been strengthened.

Box 3: Rural Proofing

“Rural proofing is the scrutiny of public service delivery, to ensure that impacts on rural areas are considered when implementing new initiatives.”

- Improvement and Development Agency, I&DeA

The Rural White Paper 2000 included a Government commitment to *“establish a rural proofing mechanism to ensure that all major policies are assessed for their rural impact”*. Government departments and Government Offices for the regions are required to report annually on how their policies have been rural proofed.

The former Countryside Agency developed a rural proofing checklist containing 15 questions which policy makers should ask of their initiative. These questions include, for example:

- **Will the policy affect the availability of public and private services?** Might it encourage closure or centralisation and will this have a disproportionate effect in rural areas where services are already limited?
- **Will the cost of delivery be higher in rural areas where clients are more widely dispersed or economies of scale are harder to achieve?** Will longer travel times or distances to clients add to the cost of service provision? Will services need to be run out of smaller outlets, so losing economies of scale?
- **Does the policy rely on infrastructure (e.g. broadband ICT, main roads, utilities) for delivery?** How will the policy work in rural areas, where the existing infrastructure is typically weaker

²³³ Improvement and Development Agency (2008). *The EqIA process: six-step guide* [online] available at: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=8017502> (accessed 09/09)

²³⁴ London Health Commission (no date). *Health Impact Assessment* [online] available at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/lhc/hia/> (accessed 06/09)