



## **Scoping Checklist - determining the focus, methods and work-plan**

This stage establishes the terms of reference and agreed plan for a health impact assessment. It involves asking questions and making decisions in relation to undertaking the assessment.

It is not necessary for a screening tool or session to have been completed previously. However, a screening tool is useful and beneficial for helping to determine the focus of the health impact assessment. Ideally, the scoping should not be completed in isolation.

1. What are the time scales? (And when do crucial decisions need to be made?)
2. What financial and human resources are available?
3. Geographical boundaries of the project? (Do you need to consider the impact of people in other areas or communities that may be affected?)
4. What kind of assessment is necessary and/or possible in the time available – rapid or in-depth?
5. Should the assessment be an in-house exercise or should someone be commissioned to do the appraisal?



## **Guidance Notes**

### ***Timescales***

It is essential to establish the decision-making time scales of the proposal to ensure that the health impact assessment can have an opportunity to influence the final decision.

What time will you have to shape the decisions you make about the kind of health impact assessment you are able to undertake?

### ***Resources***

Clarify what resources are available in terms of additional funding and people's time. You will need to develop an approach which makes the best use of the resources you have at your disposal -health impact assessment is a flexible tool.

### ***Geographical boundaries***

It is important to agree the geographical boundaries of the health impact assessment. There may be impacts that impinge on populations beyond those directly affected by the proposal so it will be important to make a decision as to where you set your boundaries and the reasons for this.

### ***Focus of appraisal***

To ensure the best use of scarce resources you will want to focus on those impacts that are most likely to occur and have the greatest potential impact on health and inequalities. Using the screening matrix and reporting sheet you should identify which areas of impact the appraisal should focus on.

### ***Type of assessment***

How in-depth your assessment is will depend on the timescales, the resources available and the complexity of the project. Rapid assessments can involve a single stakeholder meeting and a report. More comprehensive assessments can take months and involve systematic literature reviews, new data collection and expert analysis.

If health impact assessments are to become part of on-going decision-making processes then it is likely that more rapid assessments will be favoured. In Wales, a three meeting approach is reported by some as being the one that most organisations have the capacity to accommodate.

### ***Stakeholders***

Stakeholders are those that are involved in the development of the proposal and those who are likely to be affected by the proposal. Their involvement is important for the reasons stated above. You should certainly invite representatives of key stakeholders onto the steering group if you have one. However, you may also decide that you wish to obtain particular stakeholder views as a part of the appraisal.

### ***Steering group***

A steering group can provide an effective means of distributing tasks. The size will depend on the length and complexity of the project. More than 12 people could prove unwieldy. You should ensure that you have representatives of key stakeholders involved (see below). This helps to promote wider participation in, and ownership of, the process. You should also try to get a mix of skills. Depending on the type and complexity of the proposal these skills may include community involvement or development, research, project management and policy analysis.

You may also wish to have people with specific knowledge. This is likely to include public health, but may also include specialist knowledge in the social sciences, epidemiology, environmental health or health economics. You should also remember that community representatives have particular insights as to how proposals will affect local people.

When you decide to set up a steering group will depend on circumstances. You should decide on a preliminary steering group at the end of the screening process. This means that you will have a broad group of people to participate in the scoping process. One of the first tasks of the steering group is to agree how often the group should meet and to agree dates.

### ***Additional support***

If health impact assessment is to develop as a routine aspect of decision-making then it should not demand additional resources. The point is that it is a way of improving decision-making in a way that takes health and wellbeing into account. However, there may be some health impact assessments that require a more in-depth assessment. Perhaps a more extensive literature review is required or you need to collect some new local data. Where this is necessary you may want to appoint someone to undertake some of the tasks involved. But this will incur a cost. Appointing someone external to the organisation is one option. You should also consider alternative options such as secondments, where someone within the organisation has the opportunity to acquire skills that are both valuable to the organisation and their personal career development.

In addition, you may have people who have skills in facilitating health impact assessment events and you should make use of them whenever possible.

### ***Roles and responsibilities***

There will be a range of tasks involved, which should be agreed at this stage. These may include:

- chairing of meetings
- taking and circulation minutes
- booking venues for meetings, and
- writing reports.

More general roles of the steering group also need to be agreed so that members are clear what is expected of them. For instance, members of the steering group may themselves be responsible for providing access to certain forms of information or evidence, or in accessing specific groups of people as part of gathering particular viewpoints. They are also expected to at least make comments on any drafts of the final report or set of recommendations.

### ***Methods to assess impacts and gather evidence***

Depending on the nature of the proposal and the resources and time available you will at least have some idea about the methods you wish to use to assess the potential impacts. You may wish to do this in the form of stakeholder meetings, interviews with key experts, focus groups or surveys. You should also try to agree how you are going to identify what existing evidence is available, both locally and nationally.