



Health Impact Assessment Guidance: Executive Summary

Standalone Health Impact Assessment
and health in environmental assessment



MAKING LIFE BETTER



The Institute of Public Health (IPH) is an all-island organisation. The purpose of the Institute is to inform public policy to support healthier populations in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The Institute does this through research and evidence review; policy analysis and evaluation; partnership working; specialist training and public communications.

Published by the Institute of Public Health in Ireland

© The Institute of Public Health in Ireland, 2021

Reproduction authorised for non-commercial purposes provided the source is acknowledged. Reproduction for commercial purposes please contact hia@publichealth.ie.

Institute of Public Health in Ireland

ISBN 978-1-913829-18-6 DOI 10.14655/11971-1084898

Citation

Pyper, R., Cave, B., Purdy, J. and McAvoy, H. (2021). Health Impact Assessment Guidance: Executive Summary. Standalone Health Impact Assessment and health in environmental assessment. Executive Summary. Institute of Public Health. Dublin and Belfast.

Acknowledgement

This guidance was co-authored and edited by Ryngan Pyper (BCA Insight Ltd), Ben Cave (BCA Insight Ltd) and by Joanna Purdy (IPH), Helen McAvoy (IPH).

Dr Monica O'Mullane, Erica Ison and Katie Hirono also reviewed different drafts of the documents.

For further copies of this document please contact:

The Institute of Public Health in Ireland

700 South Circular Road
Dublin 8
Ireland
D08 NH90

6th Floor, City Exchange
Gloucester Street
Belfast
BT1 4JH

Tel: +353 1 478 6300

Fax: +353 1 478 6319

Tel: +44 2890 64 84 94

Fax: +44 2890 64 66 04

Email: hia@publichealth.ie

Disclaimer: The examples from impact assessments are for illustration and do not imply that the Institute is making a statement about the quality of each example. Consultants that are mentioned in these illustrations are not endorsed by the Institute.

At a glance – the Guidance documents



This Guidance is presented in four formats. Each document is aimed at a different readership, and each has a different degree of complexity and technical detail.

This is the **Executive Summary**.

The Executive Summary is aimed at officials and leaders in all sectors whose decisions can directly or indirectly influence the health of populations. These decisions could relate to legislation, policies, plans, programmes or projects.

This Executive Summary covers:

- What is Health Impact Assessment (HIA)?
- Who is the HIA Guidance for?
- What does the HIA Guidance cover?
- How does the HIA Guidance interface with other impact assessments?

1. What is Health Impact Assessment?

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a process that can be used to help improve the health of communities and reduce inequalities in health.

This guidance refers to assessments being conducted on a 'proposal'. A proposal could be legislation, a policy, a plan, a programme or a project. HIA brings better awareness of the health implications of decisions, including decisions that are outside of the health sector.

HIA is a structured process which assesses proposals while they are being planned. The likely effects of a proposal on health are assessed, leading to a consideration of how to improve the proposal to protect and enhance health.

HIA can be applied at the strategic level to regulations, policies, plans and programmes. HIA can also be applied at the project level. There is no legal requirement to conduct a HIA in Ireland or Northern Ireland but using HIA can support better integration of health and health equity into decision-making.

2. Who is the HIA Guidance for?

The Guidance can be used to support people working in national and local civil service, public health, environmental health and health promotion, place-making and community development and the wider community sector. The Guidance can support those directly engaged in considering the health implications of new proposals as well as those who are considering commissioning others to assess implications.

HIA supports the delivery of government strategies for improving population health and health equity – *Making Life Better* in Northern Ireland, and *Healthy Ireland* in Ireland. HIA can also be a useful process to support government and civil society agendas to promote sustainability, social inclusion and community development, and to integrate multiple policy agendas.

The final content of the Guidance was shaped by an independent advisory committee and the input of international HIA experts.

3. What does the HIA Guidance cover?

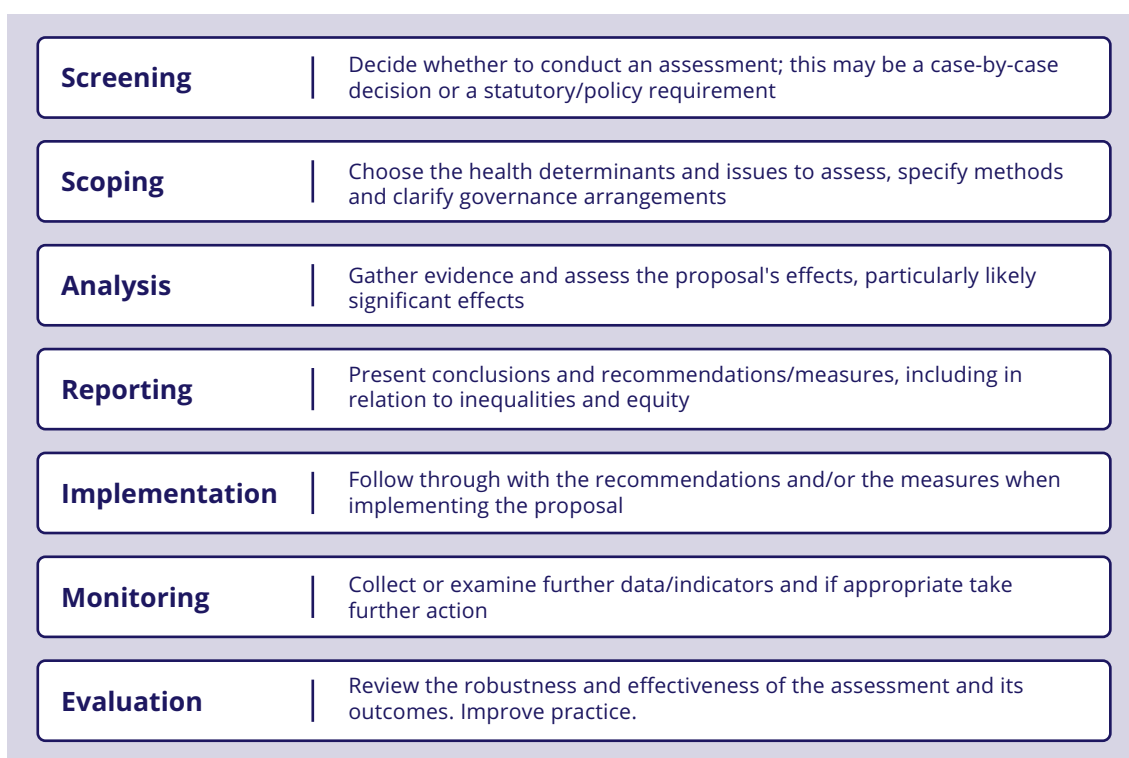
The Institute of Public Health (Institute) has developed the Guidance to support people working in many different roles to understand the purpose and scope of HIA. The Guidance is intended for both those who are new to HIA or already experienced. The *Manual* and *Technical Guidance* provide additional detail for commissioners and experienced HIA practitioners.

The Guidance is for Ireland and Northern Ireland but incorporates elements of wider UK, European and international best practice. It updates previous guidance from 2009.

The Guidance provides guiding principles for HIA as well as practical tools and models that are flexible enough to adapt to the needs of different sectors and disciplines. Case studies are included to show what HIA looks like in practice.

The Guidance steers the user through all steps of HIA.

Tools and demonstrations are featured in the Guidance on each of the steps of the HIA process, as shown in the Figure below.



The Guidance provides practical advice on conducting a HIA, including how to develop organisational support, estimate time and resources, manage stakeholder engagement and gather data and evidence.

4. How does the HIA Guidance interface with other forms of impact assessment?

The Guidance addresses the interface between different forms of impact assessment.

HIA can be done as a standalone assessment, or health outcomes can be considered as part of environmental assessments, such as Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The triggers for considering 'health in environmental assessment' are set by statutory screening and assessment procedures for SEA and EIA. Currently there is no equivalent trigger for standalone HIA on the island of Ireland.

The steps of HIA in the figure above are common to both standalone HIA or health in environmental assessment, such as SEA and EIA. These HIA stages align to, but are different from, formal statutory reporting procedures in EIA and SEA.

HIA can inform, or be informed by, other assessment instruments, such as Poverty Impact Assessment, Human Rights Impact Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment, Regulatory Impact Analysis/Assessment and Social Impact Assessment.

This Executive Summary presents an overview of the suite of HIA guidance documents. [Further details are available in the *Manual and Technical Guidance*.](#)



Dublin Office

700 South Circular Road
Dublin 8, D08 NH90, Ireland
Tel: +353 1 478 6300

Belfast Office

6th Floor, City Exchange
Gloucester Street, Belfast
BT1 4JH, Northern Ireland
Tel: +44 2890 64 84 94

info@publichealth.ie

[publichealthie](https://twitter.com/publichealthie)

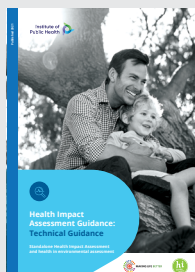


Health Impact Assessment Guidance

Document access below



[A Manual](#)



[Technical
Guidance](#)



[Plain Language
Summary](#)



[The Case
for HIA](#)



[Executive
Summary](#)