



Invest Northern Ireland
Building Locally
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Executive Summary

Draft Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on Invest Northern Ireland's Communications and Access Policy

May 2011

Executive Summary

This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) report relating to Invest NI's "Communication and Access Policy" has been drafted as a part of Invest NI's equality commitments under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Its purpose is to consider, from a Section 75 perspective, how the organisation interacts both externally with its clients and the Northern Ireland Business Base as well as internally with its staff.

The main objective of the report is to ensure that Invest NI assesses and records the likely impact of communication methods on the nine Section 75 groupings from both an internal and an external perspective.

This EQIA will continue to demonstrate Invest NI's ongoing commitment to anticipating the consequences of its policies on the Section 75 groupings and make sure that, as far as possible, any negative consequences are minimised and that opportunities for promoting equality of opportunity are maximised.

This draft report has been written to provide information to consultees. Consultation will be carried out in line with the Equality Commission Guidance and once the consultation period is closed, a final EQIA report will be prepared for Invest NI's consideration taking full account of consultee responses. Invest NI's decision will be incorporated into a final report which will be published. Thereafter Invest NI will monitor the impact of the policies to identify any further adverse differential impacts and will publish the results of the monitoring.

Policy Aim

Invest NI's core business depends on accessing and communicating efficiently and effectively with all clients, companies, individuals or organisations with an interest in the Northern Ireland economy and its labour market. The aim of the Invest NI Communications and Access Policy is: "As far as is reasonably practicable, and within available resources, to provide access to, and communications with, its staff, businesses and services in a fair, transparent and inclusive manner, mindful of corporate objectives and best value principles."

Consideration of Available Data and Research

Having considered a wide range of data and research findings and considered any adverse impact which may arise, it is proposed that Invest NI will take the following actions in respect of the outcomes of the findings of this EQIA:

1. Invest NI will work increasingly closely with DETI, other departments and the private, voluntary and community sectors, to contribute towards addressing any existing and emerging inequalities in the Northern Ireland labour market.

2. Invest NI will continue to adopt an appropriate methodology for monitoring its clients and support services with regard to appropriate Section 75 grounds. It will also remain responsive to emerging equality of opportunity issues associated with the labour market. By way of example, projects have addressed or are currently addressing the needs of women entrepreneurs and those with dependants (e.g. promotion of childcare voucher schemes).
3. In line with the Equality Commission's Guide to Promoting Good Relations, Invest NI will refine its Good Relations Strategy and will consider appropriate positive action measures to support this strategy. This work will follow on from any new guidance on good relations to emerge from the Executive and government departments, including OFMDFM, over coming months.
4. Ongoing training of all staff in relation to equality of opportunity and Section 75 responsibilities will remain a corporate priority. Where external agents or consultants work alongside Invest NI then their contractual responsibilities to meet Invest NI's Section 75 obligations will continue to be made clear through the Central Procurement Directorate's (CPD) contract.
5. The selection criteria that apply to any support, scheme or programme operated by Invest NI will continue to promote equality of opportunity. Where additional criteria are introduced, for example to target an industrial sector or geographical area, then these will be clearly defined and set out, and any potential adverse impacts associated with these criteria will be considered and, as appropriate, mitigated.
6. Each programme will make explicit in all documentation that materials can be made available in alternative formats where necessary and on request for those who are not able to access written English.
7. For those who are not fluent in English, we will continue to ensure that appropriate translation services are made available during early stages of support. However, such support will be on the clear understanding that the operation of an effective and efficient business in the medium to longer term is likely to require fluency in English among senior management and key staff.
8. We will continue to take forward our Disability Action Plan through informed interventions and appropriate consultations with representative bodies.
9. Working with appropriate representative groups, we will continue to ensure all our premises, facilities and venues are fully accessible to those with a disability. This will include ensuring, for example, that textphone numbers are added to staff and office contact details.
10. While web-based systems continue to provide an efficient means of communication both internally and externally, mindful of the 'digital divide' we will continue to be responsive to the needs of those who may be less able to access computers and information technology (IT).

11. Reflecting on the Transform Programme (the current Invest NI internal change programme) currently underway, Invest NI is likely to undergo substantial changes over the coming period. This strategic change programme, which is seeking to accelerate the impact of Invest NI's support to Northern Ireland businesses, will evaluate the potential for us to improve productivity by engaging with and supporting a wider customer base than is currently the case.

This programme is likely to affect NI businesses that are VAT registered (excluding agriculture) and who have the potential to grow sales outside of Northern Ireland. Transform aims to improve the performance and impact of Invest NI's interactions; embed a customer-led service culture at all levels; enhance the customer experience of Invest NI and bring clarity to product and service offerings through streamlined and simplified services. All stages of implementation will be subject to Scrutiny under Section 75, including screening and EQIAs as appropriate.

These measures, when implemented, should further equality of opportunity generally, in compliance with Invest NI's obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. As previously stated in our Equality Scheme, the amended policies will be regularly monitored to ensure that no adverse impact occurs.

Next Steps

We would welcome any comments that you may have in terms of this EQIA, including our preliminary recommendations with regard to measures to mitigate adverse impact and alternative policies. Further copies of this EQIA report are available on Invest NI's website at www.investni.com/equality

If you have any queries about this document, and its availability in alternative formats (including Braille, disk, large print, audio cassette, and in minority languages to meet the needs of those whose first language is not English) then please contact.

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Deadline for comments will be 1st August 2011.

Following consultation the Final Report will be made available.

Invest NI wishes to consult as widely as possible on the findings included in this EQIA, together with the preliminary recommendations offered above. The following actions are proposed:

- This report will be issued to all consultees listed in our Equality Scheme and to any members of the public on request.
- A copy of the EQIA will be posted on Invest NI's website and on the intranet.
- Individual consultation meetings will be arranged with staff on request and with representatives of particular interest groups if required.
- The report will be made available on request in alternative formats.

The arrangements for consultation are being co-ordinated by the Equality Unit to whom all enquiries should be made.

Following the formal consultation period and consideration of the findings from the consultation, Invest NI will reach a decision in terms of the EQIA process and will ensure that such decisions are implemented through the new Corporate Plan. The outcomes of this EQIA will be posted on Invest NI's website (www.investni.com/equality). It will be made available in different formats on request where appropriate.

If you require this brochure in an alternative format (including Braille, disk, audio cassette or in minority languages to meet the needs of those whose first language is not English) then please contact:

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