

Corporate Plan 2011-2015 EQIA **Third Progress Report**

Further to the statutory duties contained within Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Invest NI has made a commitment within its Equality Scheme to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on each policy where screening indicated that there may be significant implications in relation to one or more of the nine Section 75 equality categories: i.e. religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, disability and dependants.

As a result a draft EQIA on Invest NI's Communications and Access Policy was carried out in May 2011, and following a 12 week consultation process, the final report was issued in August 2011. This work consolidated earlier EQIAs involving policies under the themes of: "Recruitment and Selection" (September 2004) 'Accelerating Entrepreneurship'(July 2005), 'Business Development Programmes'(June 2007), 'Corporate Plan 2008 - 2011'(August 2008) and Corporate Plan 2011 – 2015 (August 2012).

In combination these EQIAs have already subjected all significant areas of Invest NI business and programmes to detailed scrutiny; the Communications and Access EQIA deliberately complemented this earlier work by adopting a broader perspective with regard to access and communication across all our business areas, both internal and external.

The EQIA report, which is available from Invest NI or from its website (<http://www.investni.com/about-us/our-approach/equality-commitment.html>), detailed the information that was reviewed, identified potential adverse impacts and provided preliminary policy recommendations as to how the policy should be modified to lessen adverse impacts.

CURRENT POSITION

Invest NI has now undertaken a review of the actions/recommendations contained in the final report and would like to highlight the progress made to date against each recommendation. The table below outlines progress made up to August 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROGRESS TABLE

Invest NI remains fully committed to making a contribution to stimulate economic growth, improve productivity and create wealth in all parts of Northern Ireland, and including areas of relative deprivation, so as to help narrow the gap on key indicators such as economic inactivity. This work will continue with due acknowledgment that there are many deep-rooted social and economic issues that continue to conspire to create and sustain inequalities. To remedy these inequalities will require the co-ordinated efforts from all parts of government with support from the private sector.

Having considered available data and research and considered any adverse impact which may arise, and recognising that no Section 75 ground presents immediate cause for concern, it is proposed that Invest NI will build on its existing EQIAs in taking the following actions in respect of widening access yet further and improving communication, both internally and externally¹:

Point	Recommendation	Progress up to 31/08/15
1	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.	<p>There have been three enquiries from individuals regarding the availability of interpreters for minority languages at Business Advice Interviews during 2014/15. We have accommodated these requests and also made it clear that further support is available on request. We have also supported individuals with written translation support.</p> <p>It has been made 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.</p>
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, for example, women entrepreneurs and	<p>Invest NI's Equality Monitoring Strategy monitors the impact of our policies under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and to allow evidence based assessment of whether there is any consequent differential or adverse impact.</p> <p>As a result we have refined our monitoring strategy to allow us to focus on assessing the impact of Invest NI initiatives and programmes</p>

¹ These measures deliberately overlap with, and complement, those found in existing Invest NI EQIAs (see p.8) in order to help consolidate an integrated Section 75 strategy that will inform the forthcoming Action Plan and revised Equality Scheme.

	<p>those with dependants (e.g. promotion of childcare voucher schemes).</p>	<p>on the Section 75 groups. Analysis of our monitoring reports will ensure that Invest NI's future policy development, strategies and initiatives are based on a sound quantitative evidence base. Our ultimate aim is to achieve a robust and comprehensive body of equality data across all Invest NI programmes and initiatives.</p> <p>At present we have equality monitoring data for programmes dealing specifically with individuals during 2014/15 and in respect of companies in receipt of assistance from 2013/14.</p> <p>During 2014/15, on the basis of those who provided a response, 34.7% of those applying to the interim Regional Start Programme were female, a decrease from 41% on the previous year and 40.2% the year before.</p> <p>However, 4.9% categorised themselves as having a disability, this has increased from 2% the year before and 3% previously.</p> <p>95.9% of applicants declared their ethnic origin as being White, (82.9% and 97.5% previously). 41.1% of applicants categorized themselves as coming from the Roman Catholic community, an increase from 31.7% the year before, with 36.3% as 'Protestant' and 15.7% undisclosed.</p> <p>A full breakdown of the available data for both companies and individuals is available on request to the Equality Unit.</p>
3	<p>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</p>	<p>Invest NI continues to embed the principles of 'Good Relations' where possible in the delivery of its programmes. Our Good Relations Strategy is revised on an annual</p>

	<p>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.</p>	<p>basis and is available on our website.</p> <p>In addition, Invest NI's Social Entrepreneurship Programme (SEP) has continued to support the development of new and existing social enterprises to operate to commercial business models, maximise their economic impact in terms of jobs and wealth creation, whilst respecting their focus on wider economic and social benefits. These include impact on areas of economic disadvantage, by generating sources of income, promoting innovation and entrepreneurship and helping to create sustainable and cohesive communities. However, this area of support is due to transfer to the responsibility of Councils from October 2015. More detail is available on request from the Equality Unit.</p>
4	<p>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</p>	<p>All new staff joining the organisation received equality and diversity training during 2014/15 and refresher training was also rolled out across the entire organisation. This was completed in March 2015.</p> <p>Our external agents are also made aware of their Section 75 obligations through all awarded CPD contracts and this was reinforced during training held in our Headquarters, which was offered to all our EDO's free of charge during June 2015.</p>
5	<p>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,</p>	<p>All programmes operated by Invest NI are subject to a thorough screening process in the first instance. Should these programmes introduce any changes to criteria then they are re-screened to ensure that they are not adversely impacting on any of the Section 75 groupings. If necessary an EQIA will be conducted.</p> <p>Our screening forms for 2014/15 are</p>

	mitigated.	available on our website, www.investni.com under Publications.
	<p>As a result of 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 enhance the impact of Invest NI's support on 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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/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.</p>	<p>The Transform Programme is being progressed and has been screened for equality impact. The relevant screening forms are available on our website: www.investni.com/equality</p>
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.	All corporate publications carry a statement prominently displayed, explaining that the documentation is available in alternative formats on request. The Text Relay service has also been rolled out across the organisation during 2014.
7	We will continue to take forward our Disability Action Plan through informed interventions and appropriate consultations with representative bodies.	Our Disability Action Plan was revised and issued for Consultation in 2014. We have continued in our efforts to encourage people with disabilities to start their own

	<p>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.</p>	<p>business. We have recognised the need to tailor our advice and guidance to help overcome barriers experienced by those facing disabilities and will work with disability organisations in order to meet this need. Please see our revised Disability Action Plan 2014 – 17, available on our website, for more detail.</p> <p>All actions within the plan are being carried out and we will continue to review and revise the plan on an Annual basis to ensure it is still effectively addressing specific needs.</p>
8	<p>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).</p>	<p>Following consultation with Disability Action we have made it clear that our consultation documents are available in hard copy on request, as well as on our website.</p>

INFORMATION

If you would like to view the Communications and Access EQIA or the Communications and Access EQIA Results Report, you can do so by accessing the Invest NI website at:

www.investni.com/equality

Alternatively, you can obtain a hard copy of the reports by contacting:

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