



## **Consultation on the Independent Review of Economic Policy (DETI and Invest (NI))**

### **Disability Action's Response November 2009**

Any enquiry concerning this document should be made to  
Monica Wilson  
Chief Executive  
Disability Action  
Portside Business Park  
189 Airport Road West  
Belfast  
BT3 9ED

Tel: 028 90 297880 Fax 028 90 297881  
Textphone: 028 90 297882  
Website: [www.disabilityaction.org](http://www.disabilityaction.org)  
Email: [hq@disabilityaction.org](mailto:hq@disabilityaction.org)

## INTRODUCTION

- 1 Disability Action is a pioneering Northern Ireland charity working with and for people with disabilities. We work with our members to provide information, training, transport awareness programmes and representation for people regardless of their disability; whether that is physical, mental, sensory, hidden or learning disability.
- 2 21% (369,390) of adults and 6% (105,540) of children in Northern Ireland have a disability and the incidence is higher here than in the rest of the United Kingdom. Over one quarter of all families here are affected
- 3 As a campaigning body, we work to bring about positive change to the social, economic and cultural life of people with disabilities and consequently our entire community. In pursuit of our aims we serve 45,000 people each year.
- 4 Our network of services is provided via our Headquarters in Belfast and in three regional offices in Carrickfergus, Derry and Dungannon.
- 5 Disability Action welcomes the opportunity to respond to this draft and to aid our response has put the relevant page/paragraph of the draft in brackets at the end of our comments.

## SPECIFIC COMMENTARY

- 6 Disability Action welcomes the speed of DETI's response to our request for a hard copy of this document and the placement of information on accessible formats in a prominent position.  
(Cover letter)
- 7 Disabled people are continually disadvantaged in the labour market as the statistics below reveal.
  - A person with a disability is three times more likely to be unemployed compared to a person without a disability.
  - 70% of people acquire their disability during their working life.
  - 33% of people with disabilities are in employment compared to 77% of people without disabilities.
  - Disabled persons are twice as likely to have no qualifications as non-disabled persons.

- 8 Disability is experienced by greater numbers of people in Northern Ireland than in the United Kingdom as a whole. However it is too simplistic to focus on rates of economic inactivity. Many disabled people wish to work and contribute to Northern Ireland's economy however societal attitudes limit them to entry level and low paid jobs with reduced opportunities for career advancement.  
(Page 31, paragraph 2.17)
- 9 Disability Action advises that the Tourism Industry ignores the potential of the tourism sector for disabled people. Any check on inward tourism guides shows that they are bereft of information on accessibility for disabled tourists.  
(Page 69, paragraph 3.82)
- 10 Disability Action agrees with the analysis which Identifies the need to strengthen the nature and mix of policies and programmes to deliver on the PFG productivity goals.  
(Section 1)
- 11 Disability Action supports the measures proposed to develop a portfolio of new innovation policies but regrets that the skills of the Third Sector in relation to innovation are not referenced.  
(Page 134, paragraph 7.11)
- 12 Disability Action agrees with the proposals in paragraphs 7.12 – 7.32.  
(Page 134 – 138)
- 13 In relation to improving co-ordination between DETI, DEL and Invest NI, Disability Action believes that the need to rationalise Central Government departments is of paramount importance. Investment in economic development sits alongside investment in skills development and education and training. Disability Action believes that in the short/medium term such existing functions should be better organised.  
(Page 147, paragraph 8.15)
- 14 Disability Action agrees the need for an internal review of DETI's staffing structures and advises the need for the relocation of its Equality work to either strategic policy or strategic planning departments.  
(Page 150, paragraph 8.22)

15 Disability Action supports the recommendations contained in paragraph 8.29 and 8.30.

(Page 153)

16 In relation to lack of qualifications, it should be noted that disabled people are twice as likely as their non-disabled peers to have no qualifications. This is not a lack of capability it is a lack of focus on the education and training needs of disabled citizens and a significant reduction in their contribution to Northern Ireland's economy.

(Page 177, paragraph 9.15)

## **CONCLUSION**

17 Disability Action has welcomed the opportunity to contribute to this important consultation.