



**Consultation:  
Social Economy Enterprise Strategy  
2009 – 2011**

**Disability Action's Response  
8 October 2009**

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## 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 It would be useful for the document to state exactly what the district councils will be responsible for and what duties the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) will retain in relation to the Social Enterprise Strategy 2009 – 2011 and it's enterprise portfolio.  
**(Page 14; penultimate and last paragraph)**
- 7 The actual focus is of the last paragraph of Page 21 unclear. The paragraph starts with a focus being on existing social

enterprises and that supporting the volume growth of social enterprises is not needed. However the paragraph ends with a rationale to support the establishment of new organisations in relation to other cross departmental strategies. Are these two areas of work prioritised as one more important than another and will the programmes detailed reflect this? It would also be useful to provide more information on how, in a practical sense, this Social Economy Enterprise Strategy will interact with the Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy.

**(Page 21; last paragraph)**

- 8 Disability Action believes that the focus of the Invest NI Social Entrepreneurship Programme (SEP) needs to match the support offered. If the focus of the SEP is all phases of development then the support offered needs to reflect this. The SEP also needs to mirror any priority given in the strategy to existing or new social enterprises. The strategy should state the budget for the SEP.  
**(Page 22; 2nd paragraph)**
- 9 Disability Action recommends that the budget of Invest NI's Social Economy Fund is stated in this strategy.  
**(Page 22; 3rd paragraph)**
- 10 Disability Action believes that the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) should provide a commitment to ensure that in all public tendering processes account is taken, particularly at the specification stage, of equality of opportunity and sustainable development, by the end of 2011. Progress towards this goal should be monitored and the relevant support provided. Disability Action also believes that the Department for Finance and Personnel should develop and implement a policy that ensures that unclaimed assets in dormant banks are used for social and environmental purposes. (We understand this is currently being consulted on.) This implementation should detail exactly what will be allocated to social enterprises. An estimated figure of what finance is involved should be provided.  
**(Page 22; last paragraph)**

- 11 Disability Action recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Services (DHSSPS) details how it will promote the use of social enterprises and make a commitment to ensure its public tendering process takes account, particularly at the specification stage, of the added value provided by social enterprises, by the end of 2011. Progress towards this goal should be monitored and the relevant support provided.  
**(Page 23; 3rd paragraph)**
- 12 DHSSPS's commitment to promote the awareness of the opportunities that social enterprises can offer to Health and Social Care organisations should be more specific. Disability Action ask that this commitment is explained and detailed.  
**(Page 25; 2nd paragraph)**
- 13 In relation to DSD's development of a social capital indicator toolkit Disability Action ask for more detail how this tool will be used. Disability Action also believes this action should include support for the social enterprise sector to monitor it's impact on an ongoing basis.  
**(Page25; 7th paragraph)**
- 14 As stated in paragraph 10 above, Disability Action believes that DETI, supported by CPD, and working with the Social Enterprise Network (SEN) should provide a commitment to ensure that in all public tendering processes account is taken, particularly at the specification stage, of equality of opportunity and sustainable development, by the end of 2011. Progress towards this goal should be monitored and the relevant support provided.  
**(Page 26; 3rd paragraph)**
- 15 Disability Action requests clarification on whether this strategy will provide support, including financial support, for the maintenance and future development of the whole of the Invest NI website or for those sections on the website that are specifically aimed at social enterprises?  
**(Page 26; 6th paragraph)**

- 16 Disability Action requests clarification on whether this strategy will provide support, including financial support, to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) as well as social enterprises to access opportunities for doing business with CPD. Or are these activities for private sector SMEs specifically already financed under existing programmes?  
**(Page 26; 7th paragraph)**
- 17 As stated in paragraph 10 above, Disability Action believes that CPD should provide a commitment to ensure that in all public tendering processes account is taken, particularly at the specification stage, of equality of opportunity and sustainable development, by the end of 2011. Progress towards this goal should be monitored and relevant support provided. The training detailed should include clear information on how to practically integrate equality and sustainable development into public sector procurement.  
**(Page 27; 7th paragraph)**
- 18 Disability Action requests clarification on whether this strategy will provide support, including financial support, to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) as well as social enterprises through the Innovation Vouchers scheme or are these activities for private sector SMEs specifically already financed under the Regional Innovation Strategy?  
**(Page 28; 7th paragraph)**
- 19 Disability Action requests information on how SEN propose to develop the role of Credit Unions in the social economy sector. Disability Action recommend that this commitment is explained and detailed.  
**(Page 29; 1st paragraph)**
- 20 Disability Action requests clarification on whether this strategy will provide support, including financial support, to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) as well as social enterprises through the 'meet the buyers' events. Or are these activities for private sector SMEs specifically already financed under another strategy?  
**(Page 29; 4th paragraph)**

- 21 Disability Action believes that CPD should provide a commitment to ensure that in all public tendering processes account is taken, particularly at the specification stage, of equality of opportunity and sustainable development, by the end of 2011. Progress towards this goal should be monitored and the relevant support provided.  
**(Page 29; 7th paragraph)**
- 22 Disability Action believes that the Regional Supplies Service (RSS), with the support of CPD should provide a commitment to ensure that in all public tendering processes account is taken, particularly at the specification stage, of equality of opportunity and sustainable development, by the end of 2011. Progress towards this goal should be monitored and the relevant support provided.  
**(Page 30; 5th paragraph)**

## **OVERALL COMMENTARY**

- 23 Disability Action is aware of the impact of the present economic climate and the Review of Public Administration has on this strategy. Acknowledging this in the background section would provide a better context and understanding of the strategy and it's significance.
- 24 There is also no budget attached to the strategy. Disability Action would recommend the strategy's overall budget is included and that spend is stated for each department's commitments under each objective / action.
- 25 Disability Action believes the strategy would benefit from an Action Plan that provides proposed actions, deadlines and expected outcomes for each objective / action.
- 26 This strategy is about a cultural change in those government department specifically mentioned as well as in local councils. Disability Action appreciates the significance and size of this task. To this end we would suggest that the Social Economy

Policy Group (SEAG) invites a representative/s of local councils to sit on the Group as soon as possible through the appropriate network.

- 27 We would also suggest that the CPD work with their local government equivalents or invite local government representatives to the relevant activities relating to procurement. This would support the commitment to ensure that in all public (central and local) tendering processes account is taken, particularly at the specification stage, of equality of opportunity and sustainable development, by the end of 2011.

## **CONCLUSION**

- 28 Disability Action has welcomed the opportunity to make this submission. Disability Action looks forward to continued dialogue on this and other issues of major significance to people with disabilities throughout Northern Ireland.