

**Section 75 and Schedule 9
The Northern Ireland Act 1998**

DRAFT

‘Our Future in Focus’

**Invest NI Business
Strategy
2024 - 2027**

Equality Impact Assessment

Invest Northern Ireland

2024

INVEST NI
Business Strategy 2024 - 2027
Equality Impact Assessment
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PREFACE

Further to the statutory duties contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Invest NI is committed to carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on each policy where screening has indicated that there may be significant implications in relation to one or more of the nine Section 75 grounds.

This draft report has been made available as part of the Formal Consultation stage of the EQIA relating to Invest NI's Business Strategy 2024-2027 and consolidates earlier EQIAs in relation to all programmes and schemes operating under the Accelerating Entrepreneurship Strategy (AES) and Business Development Solutions (BDS) together with the Recruitment and Selection EQIA and the Corporate Plan EQIAs for 2008-2011, 2012-2015 and 2017-2021.

As this is our first Business Strategy since 2017, we would welcome any comments that you may have in terms of this EQIA, including our preliminary recommendations with regard to processes to mitigate adverse impact, to ensure that we take these fully onboard within the implementation of our Strategy. Further copies of this EQIA report are available on Invest NI's website at [Equality commitment](#). If you have any queries about this document, and its availability in alternative formats (including Braille, disk, large print and 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: 16th December 2024.

Following consultation the Final Decision Report will be made available.

INTRODUCING INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND

Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI) was established as a corporate body under the Industrial Development Act Northern Ireland 2002, to work in partnership with the Department for the Economy (formerly the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)) in order to stimulate and encourage economic development in Northern Ireland¹.

We deliver our business within the economic policy context determined by the Minister for the Economy and the wider Government framework set by Northern Ireland's Executive.

Our Northern Ireland headquarters is located at:

- Bedford Square, Bedford Street, Belfast BT2 7ES

We also operate through five regional offices:

- *Belfast City*: Bedford Square, Bedford Street, Belfast BT2 7ES
- *Eastern*: ECOS Hubs, Kernohans Lane, Broughshane Rd, Ballymena, BT43 7QA.
- *North West*: 5th Floor, Timber Quay, 100-114 Strand Road, Derry BT48 7NR; The Science Innovation Centre, Cromore Road, Coleraine BT52 1ST
- *Southern*: Drumalane Mill, The Quays, Newry BT35 8QF; Oracle Conference Centre, Upper Bann Institute, 36 Lurgan Road, Portadown BT63 5BL
- *Western*: Kevlin Buildings, 47 Kevlin Avenue, Omagh BT78 1ER; INTEC Centre, 36 East Bridge Street, Enniskillen BT74 7BT

And a number of international offices which are based around three international centres:

- *Europe* – London, Dublin, Brussels, Dusseldorf
- *North America* – Boston, New York, San Jose, Chicago, Toronto
- *Asia / Pacific* – Seoul, Tokyo, Taipei, Shanghai, Mumbai, Dubai, Jeddah

INVEST NI and SECTION 75

Section 75 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that Invest NI shall, “in carrying out its function relating to Northern Ireland, have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity” between the following **nine Section 75** grounds:

¹ Further details of founding legislation, roles, powers and responsibilities can be found in Invest NI's Partnership Agreement, issued by DfE (xx 2024) and available on request from the Equality Unit.

- Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Men and women generally;
- Persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Persons with dependents and persons without.

In addition, and without prejudice to these obligations, in carrying out our functions we are committed to promote good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Invest NI's Revised Equality Scheme was approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on 25th July 2012. This scheme sets out arrangements as to how Invest NI proposes to fulfil its obligatory duties determined through Section 75 legislation and its implementation.

The Revised Equality Scheme also acknowledges the commitment to carrying out Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) and policy reviews on existing policies and to screen all new policies as required.

Invest NI screens all policies, written and unwritten, to assess which policies may potentially impact on equality of opportunity and / or good relations obligations.

Following this screening process, it was determined that Invest NI's new Business Strategy for the period 2024/25 to 2026/27 should be subjected to a high-level Equality Impact Assessment. Whilst it is recognised that the policies that will most greatly impact our Section 75 and associated obligations will flow out of the implementation of our Strategy, we feel it is important to use this opportunity to assess and restate how we plan to meet our obligations and commitments to delivering in this area. This report presents the draft findings of that assessment.

INVEST NI BUSINESS STRATEGY (2024–2027)

Summary

As the economic development agency for Northern Ireland, Invest Northern Ireland plays a key role in driving economic growth through supporting local businesses to grow through investing in jobs, exports and innovation and by helping attract new export-focused inward investors. Our work is directly aligned to the policy priorities and objectives of the Economy Minister, Department for the Economy and the Northern Ireland Executive, relating to both economic prosperity and social inclusion.

The NI economy has grown steadily since 2017. Our previous Business Strategy, for the period 2017-2021, centred on helping to support businesses, to scale and to standout. Over the 4 year period of the Strategy, we exceeded expectations and targets, delivering the following results for the Northern Ireland economy:

| Invest NI Strategic Target | 2019 Outturn | 2020 Outturn | 2021 Outturn | 2022 Outturn | 2023 Outturn | Cumulative Outturn |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Additional Jobs | 8,865 | 7,485 | 9,582 | 11,342 | 8,307 | 45,581 |
| Business Expenditure on Research & Development | Not Available | 23.3 | 34.0 | 4.7 | 90.6 | 152.6 |
| Sales | 1.3 | -0.3 | 1.4 | 4.0 | 2.2 | 8.5 |
| External Sales | 1.0 | -0.3 | 1.1 | 3.2 | 1.6 | 6.5 |
| Exports | 0.4 | -0.9 | 0.2 | 1.4 | 0.8 | 2.0 |

Whilst total employment is at record highs and unemployment at record lows, economic structural challenges remain relating to Economic Inactivity, youth unemployment, gender balance, areas of deprivation and educational attainment. Northern Ireland, like the wider UK, also continues to suffer from constrained Productivity performance, the key driver of higher living standards over the longer term. Real earnings for many people in NI have stagnated over the last decade² (with median gross real weekly earnings growing by less than £50 a week between 2013 and 2023). Whilst the economy is forecast to continue to grow in the next few years, growth is expected at lower levels than historical comparisons due to a number of macro-economic factors which have transformed our current and future operating environment.

The likely continuation of public spending restraint reinforces (i) the importance of building a bigger and more competitive private sector and (ii) the need for us to ensure value for money for every pound we spend. We will continue to monitor, evaluate and report on the effectiveness of our interventions and seek to reduce our contribution levels, thereby maximising the return on our investment. And to

² [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings).

ensure that the economic benefits of our activities better reach all of society, we will assess how the businesses and projects we support can positively impact society, for example, through their recruitment and training policies, corporate responsibility, supply chain development, etc.

Another key focus will be assisting the transition of businesses to deal with the threats, and exploit the opportunities posed, by climate change. As a society, we need to decouple economic growth from carbon emissions. This will require a significant sustainable reset, that not only requires embracing net zero and adopting green technologies but also a revolution in operational approaches and how we use materials, including promoting the circular economy to eliminate waste and increasing the use of sustainable, eco-friendly materials.

In a period of ongoing public sector reform and in an increasingly competitive environment, be it for funding, talent or contracts, we will be seeking the private sector, other public bodies and stakeholders, to partner with us in a much more strategic and collaborative way to help achieve a more regionally balanced, sustainable, productive and prosperous economy.

A bigger and more competitive business base, however, will not be sufficient on its own to deliver true, long term economic success. Recent research has shown that economic, sustainable and social priorities are inextricably linked, and success requires that all parts of Northern Ireland are able to maximise their potential. Our new Business Strategy will look to build on our success to date and enhance our contribution to the Economy Minister’s Vision of a more balanced, sustainable and productive economy providing good jobs for our citizens. To do this, we have selected Six Strategic Priorities that will provide a framework for our response over the long term:



Business will be at the heart of our future success. It is the businesses we work with, from the smallest micro business to the largest multi nationals, that will ultimately deliver the economic benefits that are needed to realise our vision. It is our job to partner, work with, and enable businesses, through our solutions, to accelerate their growth for the benefit of all our people.

Put simply, in collaboration with entrepreneurs, businesses, investors and partners, we will seek to create more business start-ups, attract more FDI and spark increased productive, sustainable and regionally balanced business investment across Northern Ireland. Indeed, ensuring we deliver for all our citizens, across all regions of NI will be intrinsic within our 'Promoting Places and Partnerships' Priority. Key to our success will be embedding Productivity, Innovation and Exporting within our businesses' growth models to maximise their potential for future growth and success.

Equality and Good Relations Considerations:

Business Strategy 2024-2027

Whilst we have worked hard to deliver against our equality obligations since our formation, our aim across this new Business Strategy period will be to enhance this further. Section 75 will continue to be mainstreamed within our core business planning and operational processes. What does this mean? Section 75 considerations, impacts and obligations will permeate and influence all aspects, and all stages, of our work. It will not be a step to complete as we finalise plans but will be a guiding principle that will inform our delivery decisions.

The importance that we place on our Section 75 and associated obligations will be managed and driven through prominent corporate-level. These will be formally reviewed annually and updated to ensure they are delivering against our obligations in line with best practice.

Equality Action Plan

In conjunction with our Revised Equality Scheme 2022/25, we have produced a comprehensive Equality Action Plan following an audit of inequalities. Our intention is to strengthen this corporate document to drive through our equality obligations for the period covered by the new Business Strategy. The measures outlined in the Action Plan aim to further our overarching equality goals and give an indication of timescales. It will ensure our obligations are reflected in all core business of Invest NI.

This Action Plan is predicated on research and historic EQIA's conducted by Invest NI, (most recently the Business Development Solutions EQIA, Corporate Plan 2008 – 2011 EQIA, and Communications and Access EQIA). Each of these EQIA's is available to view on our website page: [Publications and Reports](#)

Whilst the Equality Action Plan is informed and influenced by our Business Strategy, it is designed to operate as a stand-alone vehicle to demonstrate Invest NI's ongoing commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity, providing a firm foundation for our work. By its very nature, it should not stand still. Instead, it will evolve as we evolve, through annual review as part of our standard business planning process, to ensure it is targeted at, and delivers against, our obligations.

Good Relations Plan

Invest NI has outlined its key actions with regards to the second statutory Section 75 duty, the promotion of good relations, through its Good Relations Plan, which can be accessed via the following link: [Invest NI Good Relations Strategy](#)

Disability Action Plan

In line with Section 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995), Invest NI operates a Disability Action Plan to demonstrate how we plan to (i) promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and, (ii) encourage participation by disabled people in public life ('the disability duties'):

[Invest NI Disability Action Plan 2023-26](#)

Environmental Society and Governance (ESG) Strategy

Invest NI has a major role to play in making a positive impact on the lives of our citizens through our interventions and project work. Whilst not a statutory requirement, our ESG Strategy is designed to outline how we, and the companies and ecosystems we support, can make that positive contribution by looking at how we operate, the services we offer, and the policies we follow, through a social and environmental lens. As such, we have designed our ESG Strategy and associated actions to align with and make a significant contribution to help Invest NI deliver against our Section 75 and associated obligations. Further information is available through the following link:

<https://www.investni.com/about-us/environmental-and-social-governance-strategy>.

CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

The Northern Ireland economy continues to present a unique profile within both the UK and across the island of Ireland. In particular the dominance of the public sector is still noteworthy. The following data summarises key issues relating to the Northern Ireland labour market with reference to Section 75 considerations.

External Data Sources

Alongside various sources of in-house data relating to the Corporate Plan, the EQIA has also been informed by relevant statistics relating to the Northern Ireland economy as derived from numerous sources and including:

- [Monitoring Report No. 32: A Profile of the Northern Ireland Workforce. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland 2023.](#)
- [NISRA Labour Market and Social Welfare - Labour Market Overview.](#)
- [NISRA Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey.](#)

Internal Data Sources

The following tables profile Invest NI assistance by District Council Area (DCA) between 2019/20 and 2023/24. (The latest 5 years for which figures are available).

Table 1: Invest NI Offer Activity by DCA 2019/20 to 2023/24

| District Council Area | Latest 5 Year Period - 2019/20 to 2023/24 | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| | No of Offers | Total Assistance Offered £m | Assistance per Head £ | Total Investment £m | Investment per Head £ | Jobs to be Created |
| Antrim and Newtownabbey | 478 | 28.54 | 243.9 | 268.77 | 2,297.2 | 848 |
| Ards and North Down | 515 | 17.78 | 132.1 | 88.09 | 654.7 | 636 |
| Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon | 1,244 | 51.72 | 301.3 | 286.66 | 1,669.9 | 1,758 |
| Belfast | 2,900 | 165.70 | 588.4 | 1,048.48 | 3,723.1 | 9,298 |
| Causeway Coast and Glens | 615 | 14.63 | 128.6 | 82.70 | 726.7 | 649 |
| Derry City and Strabane | 658 | 22.82 | 192.0 | 134.09 | 1,128.2 | 1,221 |
| Fermanagh and Omagh | 573 | 13.75 | 149.1 | 63.64 | 690.4 | 570 |
| Lisburn and Castlereagh | 916 | 33.26 | 278.2 | 157.08 | 1,313.9 | 986 |
| Mid and East Antrim | 497 | 16.15 | 142.4 | 88.81 | 783.1 | 394 |
| Mid Ulster | 1,443 | 40.53 | 348.6 | 226.55 | 1,948.9 | 1,389 |
| Newry, Mourne and Down | 1,014 | 28.30 | 199.0 | 156.50 | 1,100.5 | 1,179 |
| Total | 10,853 | 433.18 | - | 2,601.39 | - | 18,927 |
| Not Yet Determined / Multi-Location | 34 | 9.81 | - | 79.24 | - | 1,321 |
| EDO / UNI (Excl Local Councils) | 146 | 31.43 | - | 40.54 | - | 11 |

Table 2: Invest NI Assistance Offered by DCA (2019/20, 2020/21)

| District Council Area | 2019-20 | | | | 2020-21 | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| | No of Offers | Total Assistance Offered £m | Total Investment £m | Jobs to be Created | No of Offers | Total Assistance Offered £m | Total Investment £m | Jobs to be Created |
| Antrim and Newtownabbey | 106 | 4.39 | 28.38 | 386 | 115 | 4.73 | 21.91 | 91 |
| Ards and North Down | 129 | 2.00 | 10.83 | 111 | 139 | 6.23 | 37.52 | 323 |
| Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon | 314 | 15.14 | 62.58 | 372 | 321 | 12.47 | 62.53 | 203 |
| Belfast | 831 | 42.49 | 247.21 | 2,725 | 756 | 34.15 | 203.77 | 1,247 |
| Causeway Coast and Glens | 106 | 4.35 | 24.11 | 286 | 181 | 3.38 | 15.50 | 117 |
| Derry City and Strabane | 181 | 5.15 | 23.80 | 214 | 168 | 6.36 | 32.74 | 208 |
| Fermanagh and Omagh | 140 | 3.47 | 16.14 | 202 | 136 | 3.73 | 18.26 | 201 |
| Lisburn and Castlereagh | 241 | 7.48 | 42.61 | 205 | 235 | 6.84 | 29.54 | 194 |
| Mid and East Antrim | 118 | 3.15 | 20.80 | 74 | 109 | 3.27 | 13.32 | 37 |
| Mid Ulster | 377 | 11.08 | 107.94 | 632 | 339 | 6.09 | 26.14 | 236 |
| Newry, Mourne and Down | 229 | 5.82 | 29.18 | 215 | 253 | 6.94 | 46.55 | 364 |
| Total | 2,772 | 104.52 | 613.58 | 5,422 | 2,752 | 94.18 | 507.78 | 3,220 |
| Not Yet Determined / Multi-Location | 3 | 0.93 | 11.59 | 300 | 8 | 1.20 | 18.46 | 186 |
| EDO / UNI (Excl Local Councils) | 38 | 8.96 | 10.69 | 0 | 35 | 1.36 | 1.76 | 0 |

Table 3: Invest NI Assistance Offered by DCA (2021/22, 2022/23)

| District Council Area | 2021-22 | | | | 2022-23 | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| | No of Offers | Total Assistance Offered £m | Total Investment £m | Jobs to be Created | No of Offers | Total Assistance Offered £m | Total Investment £m | Jobs to be Created |
| Antrim and Newtownabbey | 103 | 13.43 | 187.97 | 273 | 82 | 3.83 | 19.23 | 45 |
| Ards and North Down | 128 | 2.25 | 8.30 | 23 | 62 | 1.73 | 6.32 | 51 |
| Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon | 271 | 6.14 | 20.92 | 124 | 160 | 12.32 | 109.98 | 822 |
| Belfast | 549 | 31.90 | 176.44 | 1,713 | 414 | 27.63 | 179.19 | 1,191 |
| Causeway Coast and Glens | 149 | 2.95 | 15.71 | 69 | 91 | 1.41 | 7.98 | 101 |
| Derry City and Strabane | 133 | 2.94 | 11.41 | 66 | 98 | 5.19 | 46.09 | 452 |
| Fermanagh and Omagh | 152 | 3.39 | 14.66 | 80 | 73 | 1.53 | 7.88 | 32 |
| Lisburn and Castlereagh | 190 | 6.80 | 18.05 | 91 | 129 | 5.18 | 29.92 | 393 |
| Mid and East Antrim | 124 | 2.85 | 10.38 | 53 | 66 | 2.40 | 14.54 | 123 |
| Mid Ulster | 309 | 10.43 | 38.49 | 183 | 207 | 5.80 | 25.61 | 156 |
| Newry, Mourne and Down | 233 | 5.57 | 27.40 | 219 | 148 | 4.53 | 20.41 | 173 |
| Total | 2,341 | 88.65 | 529.73 | 2,894 | 1,530 | 71.56 | 467.14 | 3,539 |
| Not Yet Determined / Multi-Location | 13 | 6.69 | 29.90 | 605 | 8 | 0.58 | 8.68 | 120 |
| EDO / UNI (Excl Local Councils) | 36 | 2.27 | 2.86 | 8 | 15 | 0.41 | 0.49 | 0 |

Table 4: Invest NI Assistance Offered by DCA (2023/24 & Totals)

| District Council Area | 2023-24 | | | | Total | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| | No of Offers | Total Assistance Offered £m | Total Investment £m | Jobs to be Created | No of Offers | Total Assistance Offered £m | Total Investment £m | Jobs to be Created |
| Antrim and Newtownabbey | 72 | 2.16 | 11.29 | 53 | 478 | 28.54 | 268.77 | 848 |
| Ards and North Down | 57 | 5.58 | 25.12 | 128 | 515 | 17.78 | 88.09 | 636 |
| Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon | 178 | 5.66 | 30.66 | 237 | 1,244 | 51.72 | 286.66 | 1,758 |
| Belfast | 350 | 29.53 | 241.88 | 2,422 | 2,900 | 165.70 | 1,048.48 | 9,298 |
| Causeway Coast and Glens | 88 | 2.54 | 19.39 | 76 | 615 | 14.63 | 82.70 | 649 |
| Derry City and Strabane | 78 | 3.17 | 20.06 | 281 | 658 | 22.82 | 134.09 | 1,221 |
| Fermanagh and Omagh | 72 | 1.62 | 6.70 | 55 | 573 | 13.75 | 63.64 | 570 |
| Lisburn and Castlereagh | 121 | 6.96 | 36.96 | 103 | 916 | 33.26 | 157.08 | 986 |
| Mid and East Antrim | 80 | 4.48 | 29.77 | 107 | 497 | 16.15 | 88.81 | 394 |
| Mid Ulster | 211 | 7.13 | 28.38 | 182 | 1,443 | 40.53 | 226.55 | 1,389 |
| Newry, Mourne and Down | 151 | 5.44 | 32.96 | 208 | 1,014 | 28.30 | 156.50 | 1,179 |
| Total | 1,458 | 74.28 | 483.17 | 3,852 | 10,853 | 433.18 | 2,601.39 | 18,927 |
| Not Yet Determined / Multi-Location | 2 | 0.41 | 10.60 | 110 | 34 | 9.81 | 79.24 | 1,321 |
| EDO / UNI (Excl Local Councils) | 22 | 18.43 | 24.73 | 3 | 146 | 31.43 | 40.54 | 11 |

At the present time, Invest NI has in place a comprehensive Section 75 monitoring system to profile both individuals and companies that are offered support. A summary of key statistics is presented below.

Profiling Invest NI Staff

Looking within Invest NI itself by Section 75 grounds, breakdowns of Invest NI's 615 staff as of April 2024, by grade (SOC: Standard Occupational Classification) and gender, religion and age are presented below.

Table 6: Gender by Soc Code

| Soc Code | Male | Female | Total |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 9 - Other | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 8 - Manual | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 4 - Administrative and Clerical | 72 | 151 | 223 |
| 1 - Managers and Directors | 215 | 175 | 390 |
| Total | 47% | 53% | 615 |

Table 7: Religion by Soc Code

| SOC Code | P | RC | ND | Total |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| 9 - Other | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 8 - Manual | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 4 - Administrative and Clerical | 114 | 108 | 1 | 223 |
| 1 - Managers and Directors | 205 | 180 | 5 | 390 |
| Total | 52.2% | 46.8% | 1% | 615 |

Table 8: Age by Soc Code

| Soc Code | 20 - 30 | 31-40 | 41-50 | 51-60 | 61-65 | Total |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 9 - Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 8 - Manual | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 4 - Administrative and Clerical | 51 | 96 | 48 | 27 | 1 | 223 |
| 1 - Managers and Directors | 8 | 125 | 149 | 91 | 17 | 390 |
| Total | 9.6% | 36% | 32% | 19.4% | 3% | 615 |

CONSIDERATION OF ADVERSE IMPACT

The labour market continues to be segregated in many ways, including those associated with Section 75 grounds. Whilst many of these economic inequalities lie outside the direct scope of Invest NI's work, we aim to implement our new Strategy to further equality of opportunity across the Northern Ireland labour market. Through our statutory Equality Action Plan and Good Relations Plan, we will ensure our Business Strategy and associated policies recognise our duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and that we take the requisite steps to consider and advance these duties in the development of any further related policies. A brief commentary on key inequalities attaching to the Northern Ireland labour market by Section 75 grounds is presented below.

Religious Belief / Political Opinion

It is generally acknowledged that the fair employment legislation has been effective in helping to reduce religious discrimination within the labour market (Osborne, R. & Shuttleworth, I. [2004]. *Fair Employment in NI: A Generation On*. Belfast: Blackstaff Press). For example, according to recent statistics from the Equality Commission's Fair Employment Monitoring Report No.32³, the composition of the monitored workforce had moved to 50% Protestant, 50% Catholic (excluding others; from 65% / 35% in 1990).

This is not to deny that there are still community differentials in specific sectors, locations and occupations' that require closer examination (*ECNI Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland, October 2007*) and broader indices of deprivation do vary considerably across Northern Ireland.

According to the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2017 Report⁴, the ten most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) by multiple deprivation measure are located in Belfast and Derry City and Strabane Local Government Districts (LGDs), with some notable pockets of deprivation in Newry, Mourne & Down and Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon LGDs. A small cluster is also evident in Coleraine in Causeway Coast & Glens. The most employment deprived area in NI is within the New Lodge 2 SOA in the North of Belfast LGD.

In terms of Claimant Count in June 2024, the highest claimant count rates were in Derry City & Strabane (5.0%) and Belfast (4.1%), in comparison with around 3.2% for Northern Ireland as a whole. This claimant count rate is lower than the UK average rate (4.4%).

In the past, some commentators have raised concerns that inward investment may exaggerate existing inequalities across Northern Ireland. These claims

³ [Fair Employment Monitoring Report No.30 \(equalityni.org\)](https://equalityni.org/fair-employment-monitoring-report-no-30).

⁴ [NIMDM17- with ns.pdf \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/nimdm17-with-ns.pdf).

would be contested by Invest NI which has produced two EQIAs on their programmes and schemes operating under the Accelerating Entrepreneurship Strategy (AES) and Business Development Solutions (BDS). These EQIA would indicate that the distribution of resources across Northern Ireland is fair and is proportionate. To quote from the BDS EQIA (July 2007, p.25),

‘While there have been considerable shifts in support by region over time, no single demographic index such as population size or community background can explain these findings. In the absence of contrary indicators it can be assumed that the levels of support that are applied (through offers) and gained (through assistance) must reflect a complex interplay between numerous social, economic and demographic factors, but that Section 75 considerations, including community background, do not appear to play a significant role.’

Response: *Whilst tailored religious belief / political opinion responses are not considered appropriate, when developing policies, Invest NI will be cognisant of the need to tailor provision to account for residents in areas of economic deprivation and marginalised communities across Northern Ireland. This will include consideration of specific targeted marketing or interventions where appropriate.*

Gender

The labour market continues to be segregated by gender in Northern Ireland. For example, according to the Equality Commission’s 32nd Fair Employment Monitoring Report⁵, women make up 52.4% of the monitored NI workforce. However, 69% of all part-time employees are women. This suggests there remains significant provision to improve the level of female full time employment in NI. Indeed, the Equality Commission’s Statement on Key Inequalities in Employment in Northern Ireland (May 2018)⁶ lists ‘Women, lone parents with dependents, and carers who provide less than 49 hours of care, are more likely to be in part-time employment’ as a key inequality.

Vertically, there are notable differences in the distribution of male and female employees across broad sectors of the economy. According to May 2018 Statement mentioned above, ‘Women experience industrial segregation in employment’. Indeed, the statement goes on to say that ‘Women are under-represented in industries associated with Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) such as Manufacturing, Transport and Communication, Energy and Water

⁵ <https://www.equalityni.org/Footer-Links/News/Delivering-Equality/32nd-Fair-Employment-Monitoring-Report-published>.

⁶ [Equality Commission - Statement on Key Inequalities in Employment in Northern Ireland \(May 2018\)](#).

and Construction. Stereotyping and bias within our culture and particularly within male dominated engineering and technology sectors, has been cited as one factor presenting barriers for women within these industries’.

Horizontally, the labour market also continues to be stratified by gender.

Response: *When developing policies, Invest NI will be specifically cognisant of the need to foster and account for better gender balance. This should include consideration of specific gender based interventions or targeted marketing where appropriate.*

Marital Status / Dependency

Affordable, quality childcare remains problematic in Northern Ireland, with formal provision still very low in comparison with the rest of the UK. For example, NI has 3% of the UK’s children but only 1% of the UK’s Day Nurseries⁷.

Furthermore, as the population continues to age there is a growing need to recognise caring responsibilities for elderly relatives among employees.

Response: Whilst the provision of childcare is outside of the remit of Invest NI, we would nonetheless be supportive of any initiative that strips away barriers to entry to the labour market.

Race / Ethnic Origin

The ethnic breakdown of Northern Ireland has changed dramatically over recent years, including a large rise in the numbers of migrant workers from other countries. In Northern Ireland, censuses show the proportion born outside the UK rose from 4.1 per cent in 2001 to 6.5 per cent in 2011, and 8.6 per cent in 2021.

Generally speaking, migrants in Northern Ireland are more likely to be in employment compared to their UK-born counterparts (with 80 per cent of migrants in employment compared to 74 per cent of non-migrants)⁸. In 2016, the non UK born element of the Working age population was estimated at 101,000 out of a total of 815,000 (or 12%, including people born in the Republic of Ireland)⁹. However, in the Equality Commission’s Statement on key Inequalities in Employment in Northern Ireland, the Commission identified the following specific migrant related inequalities:

- Migrant workers, particularly those from Eastern European countries, are

⁷ [Family and Childcare Trust - 2016 Election Factsheet.](#)

⁸ [Comparing Migrant Grant Integration in Ireland and Northern Ireland.](#)

⁹ [Northern Ireland Migration Labour and Skills Final - Analytical Services Research - DfE](#) March 2018.

- subject to industrial and occupational segregation.
- Migrant workers and refugees face multiple barriers to employment in Northern Ireland.
- Migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation.

Housing and welfare provision among migrant workers is widely recognised as poor, with multi-occupancy dwellings often hosting migrant workers associated with poor living conditions.

Response: *When developing policies, Invest NI will be specifically cognisant of the need to foster awareness of, and account for, an increasingly mixed racial, ethnic origin and migrant balance within NI's economy and workforce. This should include consideration of specific targeted interventions and marketing where appropriate.*

Age

NISRA 2021 population estimates suggest c700,000 of NI's population are 50 years or older (or 37%). It is predicted that this figure will rise by a further c208,000 by 2070¹⁰. According to the Equality Commission's Statement on key Inequalities in Employment in Northern Ireland, 'Those aged 50-64 years old are less likely to be in employment and more likely to be economically inactive than those aged 25-49 years old'.

The NI Labour Force Survey¹¹ estimated there were 14,000 young people aged 16 to 24 years in Northern Ireland who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in January to March 2024. This was equivalent to 7.1% of all those aged 16 to 24 years in NI, the lowest-ever rate in the time series. Whilst very encouraging, we need to remain vigilante to any potential unintended age related impacts through policy decisions and delivery.

Response: *When developing policies Invest NI will be specifically cognisant of assisting and retaining skilled workers into the workforce. This should include specific targeted interventions and marketing tailored to the changing dynamics of an ageing workforce.*

Disability

Successive labour force surveys show the employment rate within the working age population among those with a disability remains low, at around one half of that for those without a disability¹². The Equality Commission's Statement on key

¹⁰ [DfE Research - Older People Inequalities in Northern Ireland - Skills System.](#)

¹¹ [Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey – Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training \(NEET\) | Department for the Economy \(economy-ni.gov.uk\).](#)

¹² [NISRA Labour Force Survey Annual Tables 2023.](#)

Inequalities in Employment in Northern Ireland identifies ‘...a persistent employment gap between people with and without Disabilities’. The Statement goes on to say that ‘People with a disability are more likely to be not working and not actively looking for work (economically inactive) than people without disabilities; consequently, they are much less likely to be in employment than people without disabilities. In addition, the gap in the employment rate between people with and without disabilities is persistent, having shown little change between 2006 and 2016’.

Response: *When developing policies and through the delivery of our Disability Action Plan¹³, Invest NI will specifically consider scope to include targeted interventions and marketing designed to enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities.*

Sexual Orientation

Of various attitudinal and structural issues faced by those from the lesbian, gay and bisexual community in Northern Ireland, homophobic harassment at work features significantly. This has been a long standing issue as revealed by a number of historic high profile tribunal cases along with research findings (Jarman, N. & Tennant, A. (2003). *An Unacceptable Prejudice: Homophobic Violence and Harassment in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Conflict research)).

The Equality Commission’s Statement on key Inequalities in Employment in Northern Ireland identifies the following as a key inequality: ‘Prejudicial attitudes both within and outside the workplace are experienced by people with disabilities, women, Trans people, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, people from minority ethnic groups, migrant workers and those of different religious beliefs’. The statement goes on to say ‘Ignorance of Trans issues from employers and work colleagues is a key issue in Trans people participating in and sustaining employment...Prejudicial attitudes may impact on the ability of lesbian, gay and bisexual people to participate in employment, sustain employment and progress in employment’.

Response: *When developing policies, Invest NI will be specifically cognisant of the need to tailor provision to account for marginalised groups across Northern Ireland. This should include consideration of specific targeted marketing or interventions where appropriate.*

Summary

In line with the Equality Commission’s own research and the EQIAs we have conducted to date, we acknowledge the relative inequalities experienced by the

¹³ [Invest NI Disability Action Plan 2020-25](#).

above groups within the labour market.

Reflecting on the available data relating to Invest NI's activities to date, and projecting this forward, there is no data to suggest significant adverse impacts attached to the new Business Strategy. Indeed, when considered in conjunction with Invest NI's existing corporate and statutory measures to promote equality of opportunity, disability and good relations, and working in partnership with our clients and other government agencies and departments, we consider the implementation of our new Business Strategy has potential to improve equality of opportunity and good relations within the Northern Ireland labour market.

MEASURES TO MITIGATE / ALTERNATIVE POLICIES

(Preliminary Recommendations)

Invest NI remains committed to ensuring that through all aspects of its business, equality of opportunity and good relations will be promoted. We view the implementation of our new Business Strategy as a means for advancing and consolidating many of the positive initiatives we have already put in place. We will use our statutory and corporate equality, disability, good relations and ESG action plans and strategies to drive through and deliver against our obligations.

Previous EQIAs have demonstrated the steps already taken, and the positive action measures put in place to promote equality of opportunity. We will annually review and update our corporate actions and measures to ensure they stay relevant and deliver intended benefits.

Invest NI remains fully committed to making a contribution to stimulate economic growth in all parts of Northern Ireland, including areas of relative deprivation, so as to help narrow the gap on key indicators including economic inactivity. Indeed, this is a specific objective of the Economy Minister's new Economic Vision. There are many deep-rooted social and economic issues that continue to conspire to create and sustain inequalities. Remedying these inequalities will require a co-ordinated effort across all parts of government in collaboration with the private sector and Invest NI is fully committed to playing a key role in this partnership.

Working with the Department for the Economy, Invest NI will continue to monitor labour market and employment trends closely. This commitment is reflected in the considerable investment made in completing Section 75 monitoring and EQIA's. Invest NI's EQIA's and screening documents are available to view on our website page at [Equality commitment](#).

We believe that these documents demonstrate Invest NI's commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity to date and provide a firm foundation for our work going forward.

We will also work with DfE, other departments and the private, voluntary and community sectors, to contribute towards addressing any existing and emerging inequalities in the Northern Ireland labour market.

Since our formation, Invest NI has developed and introduced a number of initiatives to address longstanding inequalities. We will continue to use available data and research, to build on our corporate Equality related Action Plans and strategies to strengthen and enhance the contribution we can make. Across the period of our new Business Strategy we will take the following steps:

1. Invest NI will continue to work in partnership with other government agencies and departments, including DfE, and the private sector in a

responsive manner to contribute towards addressing existing and emerging inequalities in the Northern Ireland labour market.

2. Working in conjunction with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Invest NI will develop and launch its Section 75 Equality Action Plan 2024-27.
3. Having established an appropriate methodology for monitoring its clients and support services, Invest NI will continue to monitor its services by appropriate Section 75 grounds and will keep its methodology under review.
4. Invest NI will remain responsive to emerging equality of opportunity issues associated with the labour market and in particular among its private sector clients.
5. Invest NI will implement its Good Relations Plan in full and awaits further Executive Office guidance relating to 'Together – Building a United Community'.
6. 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 our obligations under Section 75 will also be made clear.
7. The selection criteria that will continue to apply to any support, scheme or programme operated by Invest NI will continue to encourage 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.
8. 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.
9. Building on our Disability Action Plan and subsequent consultations / feedback, we will continue to take forward the Plan through informed interventions.

These measures, when implemented, should further the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations generally, in compliance with Invest NI's obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

FORMAL CONSULTATION

As we move to embark on a new long term Business Strategy, Invest NI wishes to consult as widely as possible on the findings included in this EQIA, together with the preliminary recommendations offered above. This will enable us to adopt consultation feedback within the implementation of our Business Strategy. The following actions are proposed:

- This report will be issued to all consultees listed in our Equality Scheme.
- A copy of the EQIA will be posted on Invest NI's website and on our internal intranet and publicity material will be made available via these media to encourage staff and the public to comment on the report as appropriate.
- Individual consultation meetings will be facilitated with staff, public individuals and with representatives of particular interest groups on request.
- 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. The closing date for responses is 16th December 2024.

DECISION BY THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY

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 Business Strategy.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS OF EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The outcomes of this EQIA will be published via Invest NI's website. It will be made available in different formats on request where appropriate.

MONITORING FOR ADVERSE IMPACT IN THE FUTURE AND PUBLICATION OF THE RESULTS OF SUCH MONITORING

Invest NI will establish a system to annually monitor the impact of the policy in the future on relevant groups. This will be reviewed on an annual basis. The results of the monitoring will be widely and openly reviewed. If this monitoring / evaluation shows that the revised policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, Invest NI will ensure the policy is revised.

Examples of Section 75 Groups

'Age'

For most purposes, the main categories are: those under 18; people aged between 18 and 65; and people over 65. However, the definition of age groups will need to be sensitive to the policy under consideration.

For example, (i) in relation to employment policies the middle aged are often a vulnerable group, pensionable age is different for men and women and legal ages for working and voting vary; (ii) in relation to policies concerning young people then narrower age bands are likely to be more appropriate.

'Marital status'

Married people; unmarried people; divorced or separated people; widowed people.

'Men and women generally'

Men (including boys); women (including girls); transgender people; transsexual people.

'Persons with a disability'

Persons with a disability as defined in Sections 1 and 2 and Schedules 1 and 2 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

'Persons with dependents'

Persons with primary responsibility for the care of a child; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a person with a disability; persons with primary responsibility for the care of a dependent elderly person.

'Political opinion'

Unionists generally; Nationalists generally; members/supporters of any political party; other.

'Racial group'

Chinese; Irish Traveller; Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Black African; Black Caribbean; White; mixed ethnic group; any other ethnic group; nationality.

'Religious belief'

Protestant; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Islam / Muslim; Sikh; Buddhist; other religion; people of no religious belief.

'Sexual orientation'

Gay; lesbian; bisexual; heterosexual.

(This list is not exclusive but may be amended or added to as appropriate.)

Draft Invest NI Business Strategy Draft EQIA Action Plan

| Overarching Goals | Key Indicators | Measures | Timescales |
|---|---|---|---|
| Embed equality and diversity within Invest NI's Core Business | Raise awareness of equality obligations within Invest NI. | Induction training for all new staff when they join the organisation to include Section 75 and associated obligations. | Staff to complete induction training within 3 months of commencing employment. |
| | | 100% of Invest NI staff trained in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. | Mandatory refresher training every three years for existing staff. |
| | Fully embed and integrate Section 75 and associated obligations (such as Rural Proofing) within Invest NI's business planning process. | Formally review Invest NI's Business Strategy EQIA on an annual basis as part of our business planning process. | Annual business planning process. |
| | | Equality obligations to be addressed within business strategy and business plan. | Annual business planning process. |
| | | Review and refresh all Section 75 and associated policies to reflect on new Business Strategy. | Completed over course of new Strategy period. |
| Within Invest NI's remit, contribute to addressing Inequalities within NI's Labour Market: | Enhance and improve Invest NI's capability to impact Gender imbalance within NI's Labour Market. | Review Invest NI's current offering of gender specific initiatives and identify opportunities for new initiatives and / or enhancements. | Complete by 30 th June 2025. |
| | | Through our communications team, promote female participants within case studies and testimonials to provide the role models for future generations. | Continuous promotion through our regular communication channels. |
| (1) Gender Imbalance | In line with our Disability Action Plan, work with clients, customers, partners, and stakeholders, to deliver initiatives to further employment opportunities for the disabled. | Review Invest NI's current offering of disabled specific initiatives and identify opportunities for new initiatives and / or enhancements. | Complete by 31 st March 2025. |
| | | In line with our Disability Action Plan, host a regular event, bringing together key partners and stakeholders to help contribute to reducing employment inequalities faced by disabled people. | Annual Event, rotated across Invest NI's Regional offices. |
| (2) People with disabilities | Implement positive steps and take action to reduce social inclusion of marginalised groups and communities. | Review Invest NI's current specific initiatives targeted at marginalised groups and minority communities and identify opportunities for new initiatives and / or enhancements. | Complete by 31 st March 2025. |
| | | Widen the reach of our Regional Offices in order to drive improved economic opportunities for our most deprived communities | Host annual networking and information events across our Regional Office areas, using a range of community and partner hubs, to promote Invest NI and its services. |
| | | Implement a new Alternative Talent Pathways approach, | 31 st March 2025 |
| (3) Other Marginalised Groups & Minority Communities | | | |

| Overarching Goals | Key Indicators | Measures | Timescales |
|-------------------|----------------|---|--|
| | | <p>placing collaboration with partners at the centre, to streamline pathways to sustainable employment for marginalised groups and minority communities.</p> | |
| | | <p>In line with our ESG Action Plan, cultivate and foster better relationships with our partners to enhance engagement and interaction with representative bodies and organisations in line with our Good Relations Strategy.</p> | <p>Improve consultation and engagement with key representative groups across the year.</p> |