



December 21st, 2023

Chairperson: Councillor J Lavery BEM

Vice Chairperson: Councillor T Mitchell

Aldermen: J Baird, A G Ewart MBE, M Gregg, A Grehan, M Guy and S P Porter

Councillors: P Burke, K Dickson, J Gallen, U Mackin, A Martin, C McCready, N Parker

Ex-Officio: The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Gowan
Deputy Mayor, Councillor G McCleave

Notice Of Meeting

A meeting of the Regeneration and Growth Committee will take place on **Thursday, 4th January 2024** at **6:00 pm** in the **Council Chamber and Remote Locations** for the transaction of business on the undernoted agenda.

For those Members attending this meeting remotely the Zoom link and passcodes are contained within the Outlook invitation that has been issued.

A hot buffet will be available **in the Members Suite** from 5.15 pm for those Members who have confirmed in advance.

DAVID BURNS
Chief Executive
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Agenda

1.0 APOLOGIES

2.0 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

- (i) conflict of interest on any matter before the meeting (Members to confirm the specific item)
- (ii) pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest (Members to complete disclosure of interest form)

3.0 REPORT OF HEAD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Enquiry Handling - Call Centre Support for Enterprise Support Service October 2023

For Decision

- 📄 *1.Teleperformance Enquiry Handling Service ESS October 2023 (002).pdf* *Page 1*
- 📄 *Appendix 1a NIESS equality screening Final SR 29_06_23 (final).pdf* *Page 3*
- 📄 *Appendix 1b NIESS Rural Needs Impact Assessment Final SR 29 06 23.pdf* *Page 26*

4.0 CONFIDENTIAL REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION & GROWTH

4.1 Estimates 2024/2025 - Update

For Decision

Confidential due to containing information relating to the business or financial affairs of the person concerned (including the Council holding that information).

- 📄 *1. Director estimates report - Jan 2024 (18.12.23).pdf* *Not included*

4.2 EV Chargers

For Decision

Confidential due to containing information relating to the business or financial affairs of the person concerned (including the Council holding that information).

📄 **2. EV Chargers revised 11 12 23.pdf**

Not included

4.3 Westminster Business Showcase & Networking Event 5th - 6th September 2023 – Initial Evaluation

For Decision

Confidential due to containing information relating to the business or financial affairs of the person concerned (including the Council holding that information).

📄 **3. Westminster Evaluation - January 2024.pdf**

Not included

5.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Committee:	Regeneration and Growth
Date:	4th January 2024
Report from:	Head of Economic Development

Item for:	Decision
Subject:	Enquiry Handling- Call Centre Support for Enterprise Support Service October 2023

1.0 Background

1. In September 2023 Belfast City Council (BCC), as lead Council for the new Enterprise Support Service (ESS), advised all other Councils that the enquiry handling contract for the new service would be delayed from 1st October 2023 to 1st November 2023.
2. BCC, on behalf of the other Councils, requested that our Council maintain and manage Teleperformance UK limited, the previous GoForIt enquiry handling providers, for an additional month, October 2023.
3. All costs associated with this ESS expenditure during October 2023 would be covered from the ESS budget by all 11 Councils. It was estimated that a maximum cost of £10,000 would be required. BCC supplied a contract for funding to LCCC to cover these costs on behalf of the other Councils.

2.0 Key Issues

1. The delay to the ESS service was communicated four weeks before the service was due to begin, meaning it was impossible to get a new call centre provider procured within this time period. In any event it would not have been economically advantageous to appoint a separate contractor with the associated additional production costs.
2. As Councils did not have the internal resource, or other options to maintain a client facing service for this interim month, it was decided that LCCC should approach Teleperformance as a potential solution.
3. Teleperformance agreed to do a further one month extension of their contract dealing with call centre enquiries at the same unit rate cost as per the historical GoForIt Programme. There was no ask of inflationary or additional overhead charges.
4. A direct award was deemed appropriate due to the following circumstances.

"For reasons of extreme urgency brought about by events unforeseeable by the contracting authority PCR 2015 Regulation 32 (2) General Grounds".
5. The contract for funding has been recently agreed with the Head of Service under our Scheme of Delegation and is presented to Members for both clarity and audit purposes as this programme will in all likelihood be subject to a future audit. Members will note that LCCC is not the lead for the ESS and therefore the award of this will appear as an anomaly.

3.0	<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>It is recommended that the Committee considers and agrees to the retrospective approach to award to Teleperformance as outlined in the report.</p>	
4.0	<p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The actual cost incurred by all 11 Councils was £4,848. As LCCC is assigned 8.8% of overall costs, then individual cost to LCCC was £426. These monies were already available via a previously agreed ESS budget for 2023/24.</p>	
5.0	<p><u>Equality/Good Relations and Rural Needs Impact Assessments</u></p>	
5.1	<p>Has an equality and good relations screening been carried out?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
5.2	<p>Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions <u>or</u> rationale why the screening was not carried out.</p> <p>BCC has screened the NIESS (see Appendix). The screening exercise concludes that the NIESS is screened out with mitigating actions. BCC stated that all impacts are minor and positive. The NIESS will introduce an electronic monitoring system for Section 75 to be reviewed annually across Council areas.</p> <p>The NIESS will proactively target young people, females, individuals with disability, individuals with dependence and ethnic minorities, and will provide access to tailored support to target the most under represented groups.</p>	
5.3	<p>Has a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) been completed?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
5.4	<p>Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions <u>or</u> rationale why the screening was not carried out.</p> <p>BCC has completed RNIA for the NIESS (see Appendix). In this document BCC concludes that the NIESS is likely to impact positively on rural communities as it promotes equal access to service support.</p> <p>The document states that the programme will propose both in person and on-line, support activities and events that can be rotated across areas to ensure that rural communities have equal access to services.</p>	

<p>Appendices:</p>	<p>Appendix 1a - ESS Screening Appendix 1b – ESS RNIA</p>
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Equality Screening Template



The Council has a statutory duty to screen. This includes our strategies, plans, policies, legislative developments; and new ways of working such as the introduction, change or end of an existing service, grant funding arrangement or facility. This screening template is designed to help departments consider the likely equality impacts of their proposed decisions on different groups of customers, service users, staff and visitors.

Before carrying out an equality screening exercise it is important that you have received the necessary training first. To find out about the training needed or any other queries on screening, contact the Equality and Diversity Officers (job-share) Stella Gilmartin or Lorraine Dennis on extension 6026/6027 or by email equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

The accompanying **Screening Guidance** note provides straightforward advice on how to carry out equality screening exercises. Detailed information about the Section 75 equality duties and what they mean in practice is available on the Equality Commission's website¹.

The screening template has 4 sections to complete. These are:

Section A - provides details about the policy / decision that is being screened

Section B – gives information on the consultation process, supporting evidence gathered and has 4 key questions outlining the likely impacts on all equality groups.

Section C - has 4 key questions in relation to obligations under the Disability Discrimination Order

Section D - is the formal record of the screening decision.

Section A

¹ <http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/S75GuideforPublicAuthoritiesApril2010.pdf>

Details about the policy / decision to be screened

1. Title of policy / decision to be screened:-

Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS)

This screening is for the regional Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) and considers each Council's needs. It will be at the discretion of individual Councils as to whether local screening exercises need to take place.

The NIESS aligns to the Programme for Government, 10x Economic Strategy, DfE Economic Recovery Action Plan, City & Growth Deals, and the Community Plans of local Councils.

Since 2015, Councils have been responsible for economic development, including responsibility for supporting business start-ups and the growth of micro/small businesses. NIESS will support the Councils to deliver on statutory responsibilities for delivering enterprise and business start-up support.

2. Brief description of policy / decision to be screened:-

The Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) aims to deliver a connected enterprise support service that enables individuals and businesses to access the relevant support services to meet their needs, and the growth ambitions of their businesses.

NIESS offers the opportunity for greater systematic collaboration across Council areas where embedded business start-up (and business growth) ambitions will underpin the creation of a more effective ecosystem of support. In turn offering the scope for greater connectivity and simplification for clients. This collaboration can be geared to/aligned to priorities, such as the economic vision for a '10x Economy' - where a culture of entrepreneurship and support for new business development will drive place-based growth, including through new / emerging technologies and priority clusters.

This emphasis on 'place-based growth' within the '10x Economy' vision uniquely places Councils to contextualise this vision within local support ecosystems enabling each Council to tailor provision to prevalent local needs. For instance, to align to different ambitions for Innovation Driven Enterprises (IDE) within City/Growth deals, different sectoral priorities, female entrepreneurship priorities, and varying needs within rural and urban areas.

In addition to 10x, the NIESS aligns/contributes to a range of national, regional, and local strategic/policy including -

- UK Industrial Strategy - The NIESS will contribute to the fourth component of the strategy, which is making the UK the best place to start and grow a business in addition to building an innovative economy, supporting high quality job creation; earning potential and place-based growth.
- 10X Economy - The NIESS will play a key role in fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and supporting new business development to drive place-based growth in Northern Ireland's decade of innovation. Overall, it will make a significant contribution to the 10x vision and the forthcoming Entrepreneurship Strategy/ Action Plan.
- New Decade/New Approach – The NIESS offers the potential for skills and capability development amongst a diverse range of entrepreneurs and enterprise types, with scope to flex delivery to sub-regional needs (contributing to the development of a 'regionally balanced' economy).
- Draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework - The NIESS will impact on the outcome area of '*our economy is globally competitive, regionally balanced and carbon-neutral*' which has a core focus on helping companies engage in innovation and research; develop creativity and entrepreneurship; build inclusion and pathways to economic activity, contributing to outcome areas of '*we have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect*' and '*everyone can reach their potential*'.
- Economy 2030/the Industrial Strategy for NI – The NIESS and the focus on entrepreneurship

and innovation will contribute across 4 of the 5 key pillars of the strategy.

- Invest NI business plan (21/22) - The NIESS will contribute to three of the drivers highlighted in the plan in particular - entrepreneurship and commercialisation, skills, and innovation. The narrative recognises the Business Plan will provide, not just a pathway to recovery, but also build strong foundations for 10X Economy transformative growth.
- DAERA Rural Policy Framework - The NIESS offers strong potential for the core offer to be flexed by Councils to rural constituencies of need, thus contributing directly to the above policy imperatives.
- DfC's Employability NI policy - The NIESS will specifically cater for the needs of those distant from the labour market (for whom entrepreneurship may be a 'pathway' to the same). This will be delivered via engagement, community-outreach and early stage supports that can be flexed/ tailored to needs prevailing within each Council area.
- City/Growth deals - The NIESS can be tailored sub-regionally to the match the bespoke ambitions of each City/ Growth deal - whether it be via creating inclusive entrepreneurship as a pathway to the labour market or supporting IDE creation linked to sectors with global market potential.
- Community Planning – The 11 Councils that are partners in this project, as created in the reform of Local Government in 2015, were given the responsibility of leading the community planning process for their district. All Councils now have Community Plans in place as a result of extensive consultations undertaken with their local communities and are currently in implementation and oversight/ monitoring mode. Therefore, it is important as part of the sub-regional policy context to also review how the service will help reinforce the ambition within these Community Plans. The plans are all shaped around delivering against priority outcomes for their districts – and all have a focus/ theme on enabling inclusive economic growth in their district which means levels of support may need to be differentiated to reflect local needs. There is a strong focus on the future proposals for Council-led Enterprise Support Services i.e., building in the ability for Councils to ensure their local support ecosystems can cater for a wide range of entrepreneurs and enterprise types. As such it will contribute strongly to the economic imperatives and related outcomes in the Community Plans in each of the Councils.
- The NIESS will also complement all 11 Councils current Corporate and Economic Departmental strategies which have a key focus on growing an inclusive economy, encouraging business start-ups, growth ambitions and creating new opportunities for our residents.

The scope of the service includes activity to be delivered under four elements, (engage, foundation, enabling growth, accelerated scaling) representing a continuum of support that will be required from pre-start support, through start-up and the growth journey thereafter. Each element may comprise of a range of projects or initiatives, each with their own area of focus and expertise to help individuals, entrepreneurs, and businesses in addition to the provision of grant funding.

KPMG have provided procurement guidance to Councils to ensure the new service offers flexibility; provide comprehensive regional coverage; aligns to community plans and regional strategic objectives; and can maximise regional investment programmes.

Each of the Councils have sought approval for delivery of the service for the first 2-year period. Links to each individual Councils' approval is included in Appendix A.

3. Aims and objectives of the policy / decision to be screened:-

The key objectives of the NIESS align to the 10x Economic Strategy, Programme for Government, DFE Economic Recovery Action Plan, City & Growth Deals, and the Community Plans of local Councils, in particular:

- Creating employment and opportunity
- Fostering business growth
- Strengthening business relationships and making it easy to conduct business
- Reducing economic inequalities
- Address barriers to employment at structural and personal levels
- Address educational inequalities and increase skills attainment
- Reduce poverty and economic inactivity
- Requirement for a long-term business start interventions
- UK government drive to push out the “levelling up” agenda, and need to consider models for local delivery of targeted interventions
- Development of new ways of working such as Labour Market Partnerships, which create templates for alternative partnership approaches with Councils at the core in “bridging” local need with regional/national policy

The NIESS will provide an offer than can meet future ambitions whilst ensuring an inclusive approach, where local ecosystems in each Local Government District will be able to cater for a diverse range of entrepreneurs and enterprise types.

Delivery of the NIESS will consist of 4 key elements representing a continuum of support that will be required from pre-start support, through start-up and the growth journey thereafter. The support aims to engage with 22,050 individuals/businesses at its peak.

Whilst this is a regional service, Belfast City Council have led on the development of the service and are the nominated lead Council for the ongoing development and delivery. As such, BCC will lead on procurement for the service with each individual Council contributing to ensure the service meets the local needs of each Council. There are four proposed elements of provision:

<p>ENGAGE - Early aspiration and support (for would be entrepreneurs)</p>	<p><i>Reaching 12,000 per annum and working more intensively with c3.5K per annum to refine and support a start-up idea. To achieve a minimum of 1,500 individuals achieving a wider range of start-up outcomes, outside of formal business registration data as well as a range of other impacts.</i></p>
<p>FOUNDATION - Support for early founding (employer enterprises/ start-ups)</p>	<p><i>To work with c1,200 individuals/ businesses per annum to work towards target of 750 registered start-ups</i></p>
<p>ENABLING GROWTH – Aligned to aspirations and potential</p>	<p><i>To work with c4000 businesses per annum arising both from the start-up pool above and entry of existing businesses from LGDs that meet eligibility criteria</i></p>
<p>ACCELERATED SCALING - for start-ups typically over 2 years old</p>	<p><i>To work with 10 organisations to achieve the indicative target of 30 by 5 years</i></p>

4. On whom will the policy / decision impact?

Staff	YES
Service users	YES
Other public sector organizations	YES
Voluntary / community groups / trade unions	YES
Others, please specify	YES, Delivery Agents, Stakeholders

The NIESS will specifically target individuals with entrepreneurial intentions or those who haven't previously considered entrepreneurship (particularly those in underrepresented groups), those interested in starting a business or becoming self-employed, and existing businesses across the region. Through our previous work and evidence available we envisage NIESS will impact positively on those indicated above. Belfast City Council will assess the impact of the service through ongoing monitoring and evaluation across the region. Belfast City Council as Lead Partner will glean evidence from key stakeholders/ delivery agents/clients at set intervals through ongoing monitoring and evaluation. This information will be obtained through monitoring returns against KPIs, Focus Groups, questionnaires etc.

5. Are there linkages to other Agencies/ Departments?

The NIESS is being led by Belfast City Council and involves all 11 Councils across Northern Ireland. The engagement of and alignment with the work of key partners across the public, private and third sectors will be central to its effectiveness.

Through the development of the initial research, options analysis, and Outline Business Case (OBC) we have undertaken an extensive engagement and consultation process with individuals, other agencies/departments and partners across the region. This has included, over and above regular and ongoing engagement with all 11-Councils Working Group members, SOLACE Economic Recovery Group, Department for Economy, Invest Northern Ireland, DAERA, Department for Communities, InterTrade Ireland, Young Enterprise NI, Princes Trust, Women in Business, Catalyst Inc, Queens University Belfast, University of Ulster, Social Enterprise NI, Enterprise NI, www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk team and Max Impact (provide support for refugees and migrants).

As part of the ongoing development of the service, further research was commissioned to refine and shape content and marketing strategies to form a brand awareness strategy, that focuses on the customers, the language used to identify and engage potential clients and help to shape enterprise awareness activities to assist recruitment targets. Individuals from a range of different backgrounds were engaged through email surveys and facilitation of focus groups around the perceptions of the current support provision from Councils. This included representatives from each of the 11-Councils, relevant business stakeholders e.g., local enterprise companies, consultants and delivery agents for current ERDF programmes, stakeholders from priority groups including female entrepreneurs; young people; individuals with a disability; individuals from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. Over 300 were contacted and 55 responses received citing a lack of flexibility; the need for one point of contact; inconsistency of information / delivery across Councils; lack of joined up thinking and duplication – the new service will redress these within the various elements of support.

BCC as lead Council facilitated a pre-market engagement event in January 2023 for all interested parties presenting the proposed procurement framework for feedback on the model. Attended by over 120 stakeholders/potential suppliers to inform and finalise the procurement framework documents. The purpose and likely evolution of stakeholder engagement around this service has been developed following engagements with key stakeholders and factored as part of the Management and

Governance structure. Through the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the service client and stakeholder engagement will be factored in to ensure the service continues to meet the needs of target groups and is embedded as a core element of the enterprise ecosystem across the region.

External

Ref list above (paragraph 2)

Department for the Economy (DfE)

Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

DfC

Invest NI

Local enterprise and business support partners

Universities and Colleges

Internal

Ref list above (paragraph 2)

Individual Councils community plans

Individual Councils corporate and economic strategies

Section B**Information on the consultation process, supporting evidence gathered and has 4 key questions outlining the likely impacts for equality and good relations**

6. Outline consultation process planned or achieved

Consultation achieved:

- As referenced previously, through the development of the initial research, options analysis and Outline Business Case (OBC) we have undertaken an extensive engagement and consultation process with individuals and partners across the region. This has included, over and above regular and ongoing engagement with all 11-Councils Working Group members *(see below) - SOLACE Economic Recovery Group, Department for Economy, Invest Northern Ireland, DAERA, Department for Communities, InterTrade Ireland, Young Enterprise NI, Princes Trust, Women in Business, Catalyst Inc, Queens University Belfast, University of Ulster, Social Enterprise NI, Enterprise NI, www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk team and Max Impact (provide support for refugees and migrants). Feedback and further details of engagement can be viewed within the OBC. Some of the key points arising from these engagements include; the need for a different approach enabling a more customised entrepreneur centric solutions catering for difference types of entrepreneurs/enterprises; the awareness that the successful implementation of the new arrangements is likely to need the involvement of several partners from across the enterprise/innovation support ecosystem and the proposal offer scope for a strong partnership approach through co-design, co-development and implementation.
- In addition to this engagement, the 11 Councils commissioned an external research agency to undertake a survey around perceptions of the current business support programme (Go For It) available across the region, to identify gaps in provision and to understand market needs with the aim of supporting the development of a future delivery model. This report completed in September 2022, collated 501 local entrepreneurs' feedback on how the programme was delivered. Furthermore, as part of the marketing strategy and brand development, an appointed contractor conducted focus groups in January 2023 specifically with females and young people and invited their participation in sense-checking decisions around visibility and awareness raising. 17 people took part in the focus groups and responded to questions on barriers to entrepreneurial success in addition to service considerations. These were incorporated into the brand development and concept review ahead of final recommendations.
- As the service mobilises, we have planned 6 month and 12-month evaluations whereby target groups will be engaged in our qualitative research through focus groups and structured interviews. These will temperature check the level of receptivity to the service within each group and further investigate barriers that exist between the groups and their entrepreneurship goals. NIESS will use the 12-month evaluation stage to flex the offer where possible to further support these needs across NI. Through our Programme Management Office, qualitative and quantitative evidence will be gathered to support decision making between the 11 Councils on the methods to achieve this.
- In November 2022, the lead Council, Belfast City Council, facilitated the event 'Inclusive Entrepreneurship in Northern Ireland: Inspire, Inform, Include,' which directly engaged with persons with disabilities. The All-Party Parliamentary Working Group for Inclusive Entrepreneurship were also engaged along with other stakeholders who have influence in the sector. Recommendations and next steps were developed as a result of this event, covering partner inclusion, funding, engagement and promotion, and strategy/policy development.
- Through the community planning process each of the Councils across the region have developed individual plans which aim to set out long-term priorities for improving the social, economic, and environmental well-being of districts and the people who live

there. Through these plans Councils work to ensure that there are shared and improved outcomes for everyone across the region.

- Each of the partner Councils have made a commitment to delivering on Equality and Good Relations aiming to create places which are tolerant and fair, where individuality is respected and diversity is celebrated, in an inclusive manner. Promoting equality and good relations are key to improving the quality of life for everyone - making the region a better place to live, work, and do business. Each of the partner Councils have developed an equality scheme, links to which are included below –

ANBC	https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/council/equality/
ABCBC	https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/council/equality/
BCC	https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/council/equality-and-diversity/equality-scheme-and-equality-action-plans
CCGBC	https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/council/publications-policies/causeway-coast-and-glens-district-council-draft-equality-scheme
DSDC	https://www.derrystrabane.com/Council/Equality
F&ODC	https://www.fermanaghomagh.com/your-council/policies/equality/equality-scheme/
LCCC	https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/council/publications/equality-section-75
MEABC	https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/council/equality-good-relations/equality-scheme
MUDC	https://www.midulstercouncil.org/your-council/equality
NMDDC	https://www.newrymournedown.org/equality
ANDBC	https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/about-the-council/equality

Consultation planned:

- From programme initiation, to support the development and delivery of the Service – Officers will undertake regular consultation with stakeholders and service users.
- Several focus groups and consultations are planned to support the service design ensuring the support in place is accessible for all user groups across the region. These focus groups will include as a minimum; individuals who have accessed business support services previously, students and young people, females, persons with a disability, ethnic minority groups, existing businesses, and the general public. Focus groups will take place across the region.
- As the service mobilises, we have planned 6 month and 12-month evaluations whereby target groups will be engaged in our qualitative research through focus groups and structured interviews. These will temperature check the level of receptivity to the service within each group and further investigate barriers that exist between the groups and their entrepreneurship goals. NIESS will use the 12-month evaluation stage to flex the offer where possible to further support these needs across NI. Through our Programme Management Office, qualitative and quantitative evidence will be gathered to support decision making between the 11 Councils on the methods to achieve this.

7. Available evidence

What evidence / information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Set out all evidence below to help inform your screening assessment.

It is important to record information gathered from a variety of sources such as: monitoring information; complaints; research surveys; consultation exercises from other public authorities.

As outlined above the service has been informed and shaped by research and consultation. In addition to the specific research for the service it has also been shaped through local intelligence at an individual Council level including –

- Belfast City Council Labour Market Partnership Strategic Assessment
- Data captured through the regional “Go for It” programme
- Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) - Maximising potential: A review of labour market outcomes for people with disabilities in Northern Ireland
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1275811/Disability-and-the-labour-market.pdf
- UUEPC and FSB – Business start-up support in Northern Ireland; a critical review and future perspectives
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/831226/Back-to-the-Start-up-Full-Report.pdf
- UUEPC – Regional Analysis of under-represented groups engaged in entrepreneurship: 2017
- GEM – Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Northern Ireland Report 2021
<https://www.gemconsortium.org/report/global-entrepreneurship-monitor-northern-ireland-report-20212022>
- NMD Labour Market Partnership Strategic Assessment (available upon request to business@nmandd.org)
- BRCD – Decade of Opportunity [Belfast Region City Deal](#)

Section 75
category

Details of evidence/information and engagement

<p>Religious belief</p>	<p>Currently data on religious belief for participants is not monitored</p> <p>The 2021 Census indicates that 45.7% per cent of NI residents are from a Catholic community background and 43.5% per cent are from a Protestant and other Christian community background. 1.5% of the population are from other religions and 9.3% of residents state they are of no religious persuasion (NISRA Census 2021).</p>																																																																																																																																																																																						
<p>Political opinion</p>	<p>Currently data on participant political opinion is not monitored.</p> <p>Composition of District Councils Based on May 2023 NI Local Elections</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="263 459 1532 952"> <thead> <tr> <th>District</th> <th>SF</th> <th>DUP</th> <th>UUP</th> <th>SDLP</th> <th>APNI</th> <th>GP</th> <th>TUV</th> <th>PBP</th> <th>PUP</th> <th>Aontú</th> <th>Militant</th> <th>Ind</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Antrim and Newtownabbey</td> <td>9</td> <td>13</td> <td>7</td> <td>1</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ards and North Down</td> <td>0</td> <td>14</td> <td>8</td> <td>1</td> <td>12</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon</td> <td>15</td> <td>13</td> <td>6</td> <td>1</td> <td>4</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Belfast</td> <td>22</td> <td>14</td> <td>2</td> <td>5</td> <td>11</td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Causeway Coast and Glens</td> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> <td>5</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Derry City and Strabane</td> <td>18</td> <td>5</td> <td>3</td> <td>10</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fermanagh and Omagh</td> <td>21</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lisburn and Castlereagh</td> <td>4</td> <td>14</td> <td>6</td> <td>2</td> <td>13</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mid and East Antrim</td> <td>4</td> <td>14</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> <td>7</td> <td>0</td> <td>5</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mid Ulster</td> <td>19</td> <td>11</td> <td>2</td> <td>5</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Newry Mourne and Down</td> <td>20</td> <td>5</td> <td>1</td> <td>8</td> <td>5</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL</td> <td>144</td> <td>122</td> <td>54</td> <td>39</td> <td>67</td> <td>5</td> <td>9</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>20</td> <td>462</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Each Council approves the annual programmes of work, and they support the promotion of the support into their local communities.</p>	District	SF	DUP	UUP	SDLP	APNI	GP	TUV	PBP	PUP	Aontú	Militant	Ind	Total	Antrim and Newtownabbey	9	13	7	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	40	Ards and North Down	0	14	8	1	12	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	40	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	15	13	6	1	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	41	Belfast	22	14	2	5	11	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	60	Causeway Coast and Glens	12	13	4	3	5	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	40	Derry City and Strabane	18	5	3	10	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	40	Fermanagh and Omagh	21	6	7	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	40	Lisburn and Castlereagh	4	14	6	2	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	40	Mid and East Antrim	4	14	8	0	7	0	5	0	0	0	0	2	40	Mid Ulster	19	11	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	40	Newry Mourne and Down	20	5	1	8	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	41	TOTAL	144	122	54	39	67	5	9	2	0	0	0	20	462
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<p>Racial group</p>	<p>Ethnicity of participants will be monitored in the NIESS</p> <p>Ethnic groups per 100 as detailed in the NI 2021 Census reported 97% selected white – 3% selected other.</p> <p>A UUEPC report on underrepresentation in business start-up across the region identified that ethnic minority groups are underrepresented, therefore these groups are actively targeted through the umbrella organisations such as Max Impact.</p> <p>Ethnic minority businesses are estimated to contribute £25-£32 billion to the UK economy per year according to the Economic and Social Research Council which should not be underestimated, and more support needs to be provided.</p>																																																																																																																																																																																						
<p>Age</p>	<p>Participant age will be monitored, the service targets those 16 plus.</p> <p>Age demographic as per 2021 Census for the NI Population is as follows: 0–14-year-olds (NI 19%) 15-39-year-olds(NI 31%) 40-64-year-olds (NI 32%) 65+-year-olds (NI 17%)</p> <p>According to GEM 2019, the majority of people starting a business are between 25 and 44. After the age of 44, the level of start-ups drops significantly down, which also means that there should be a support for young people in business and those over 44.</p> <p>The UUEPC report (Analysis of under-represented groups engaged in entrepreneurship) suggests that young people are underrepresented when it comes to enterprise. The main barriers tend to be around access to finance, skills and knowledge base.</p> <p>The service will seek to reach and support young people.</p>																																																																																																																																																																																						

<p>Marital status</p>	<p>Data on marital status is not currently monitored.</p> <p>Of the 1,514,743 'usual residents aged 16 and over' – 45.59% are married, 0.18% are in a civil partnership, 3.78% are separated (still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership) 6.02% are divorces or formally in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved and 6.36% are widowed or surviving partner from a civil partnership.</p> <p>Over the last six censuses there has been a fall in the percentage of adults (aged 16 and over) who are 'Married' - down from 61% in 1971 to 46% in 2021, with a rise in the percentage who are 'Single' - up from 31% in 1971 to 38% in 2021.</p> <p>Over the same time period the percentage of adults who are 'Separated, widowed or divorced' has risen from 9% in 1971 to 16% in 2021. The number of divorced adults has risen from 3,000 in 1971 to over 90,000 in 2021;</p>
<p>Sexual orientation</p>	<p>Currently data on sexual orientation is not monitored.</p> <p>A sexual orientation question was included for the first time in Census 2021. In total 2.1% of people aged 16 and over (31,600 adults) identified as LGB+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Other sexual orientation), 90% of adults identified as 'Straight or Heterosexual' and 8% of adults either ticked 'prefer not to say' or did not answer the question; the proportion of adults who identified as LGB+ varied by area and age. By area, this ranged from 4.1% of adults in Belfast to 1.1% in Mid-Ulster and by age from 4.6% of people aged 16 to 24 to 0.3% of people aged 65 and over.</p>
<p>Men and women generally</p>	<p>All programmes and support are available to men and women; however, the service will put in place specific provision to target females and includes specific female outreach targets. The aim of this is to increase the number of female entrepreneurs across the region.</p> <p>General gender breakdown of the Population of Northern Ireland according to the 2021 census is: Females (NI 51%) Males (NI 49%)</p> <p>The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) highlights that NI has historically lagged behind the rest of the UK in terms of enterprise start-up activity. It uses the Total Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) index to measure the propensity of individuals in particular countries to be entrepreneurial and shows that in 2019 (pre-Covid-19) the NI TEA rate was 6.6% compared to 9.9% for the UK as a whole. TEA fell across all areas during the pandemic.</p> <p>In 2021, the GEM results suggest that both male (NI 11% vs. UK 13.2%) and female (NI 3.1% vs. UK 7.7%) entrepreneurship rates are lower in NI compared to the UK average. In 2021 the gap between females and males in NI widened, after being the smallest among the UK nations in 2020. https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/GEM-Report-NI-2022.pdf</p> <p>According to the 2022 Gender Index - Northern Ireland has the lowest proportion of female-led companies at 13.5% and the highest share of male-led companies at 65.1%. This means that if Northern Ireland had a similar rate of female-leadership to that in England (at 18.3%), it would translate to an additional 3,134 female-led companies in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Women in Northern Ireland publication 2020, found the number of employees in NI was evenly split between males and females in 2019, though the number of self-employed males was more than double the number of self-employed females.</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>Disability will be monitored as part of the service</p> <p>The 2021 Census showed that 79% of the NI Population rate their health as 'good or very good' 14% as 'fair' and 8% as 'bad or very bad'</p>

Additionally, it is reported that 463,000 (24%) people have their day-to-day activities limited by a health problem or disability. 76% of the population are not limited.

All 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs) had levels of 'Good or very good' general health above 75% in 2021, with four Councils Mid Ulster, Lisburn & Castlereagh, Newry, Mourne & Down and Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon having levels above 80%.

In 2021, Belfast and Derry City & Strabane LGDs had the highest percentage of their population with 'Bad or very bad' general health (at 10.0% and 9.5% respectively). Indeed, over the decade to 2021, every LGD has seen an increase in the percentage of its population with 'Bad or very bad' general health.

From the 2011 Census to the 2021 Census, all Local Government Districts had a rise in the number and percentage of people with a limiting long-term health problem or disability in the decade to 2021. The increase was highest in Antrim & Newtownabbey at 32.0% and lowest in Belfast at 17.6%.

EU and US data shows that self-employment rates are higher for disabled people than for those without a disability. For example, in the UK, 18% of disabled men and 8% of disabled women are self-employed, versus 14% and 6% respectively for people without a disability (Boylan and Burchart, 2002).

For the first time - Census 2021 included 'Autism or Asperger syndrome' as a listed health condition and 35,000 people were recorded with this condition. Of this, 19,000 children (or one child in twenty) had 'Autism or Asperger syndrome' recorded.

A few key results for other listed conditions are 'Emotional, psychological or mental health' 165,100 people (8.7%), 'Deafness or partial hearing loss' 109,500 people (5.8%), 'Learning difficulty (for example dyslexia)' 59,900 people (3.1%) and 'Blindness or partial sight loss' 34,000 people (1.8%).

The GEM NI report notes that people with a disability are more likely to start their own business (than people without a disability) and are also more likely to set up a social enterprise. The research does however note various challenges faced by entrepreneurs with a disability which included: ▪ Lack of awareness and understanding of accessibility, both physically and virtually; ▪ Inconsistent support available across the UK; ▪ Lack of integration of disability and entrepreneurship supports; ▪ The inaccessibility of the mainstream start-up space, which often glorifies burnout or focuses on building a business alongside 9-5 work; ▪ Co-designing all programmes of support (mainstream or disability-specific) with people with lived experience of disability, and recompensing disabled people for their expertise and time, as with all other professions.

The research highlighted that supports for disabled entrepreneurs needs to tackle multiple areas, including mentorship, specific expertise, and support extended to co-founders. It also noted the possibility of business accelerator facilities, rather than being generalised in approach, taking more of an elective approach that centres on disabled entrepreneurs and attracts people interested in supporting them. The key issue here is again, ensuring that the enterprise ecosystem in NI and the services provided through the NIESS can be aligned to these specific needs, as part of an overall inclusive approach

Across the NIESS, support will be provided in order to ensure that all of our activities are accessible to all people with disabilities. NIESS will engage with organisations such as Disability Action to share programmes/academies with their network. Programme information is regularly distributed to disability support groups. Tailored awareness initiatives are in place to encourage individuals with a disability to consider starting a business and reasonable adjustments will be made where required/requested.

Dependants

Caring responsibility will be monitored as part of the service

On Census Day, 2021, within NI there are 768,809 households. 44.86% of households reported having one or more dependent children.

Census 2021 recorded that one person in eight of the population aged 5 or more (or 222,200 people) provided unpaid care to a relative or friend who had a health condition or illness. • Census 2021 also recorded how many hours the carer provided each week. One person in twenty-five (68,700 people) provided 50 or more hours of unpaid care per week. • While people of all ages provided unpaid care, it was most common among those aged 40 to 64, at one person in five (or 124,600 people). • The census also found that 2,600 children aged 5 to 14 provided unpaid care. • The overall number of people providing unpaid care has not changed markedly from Census 2011 to Census 2021. However, the number of people providing 50 or more hours unpaid care each week has increased (up from 56,300 people in 2011 to 68,700 people in 2021)

The NIESS recognises that individuals with a caring responsibility may have their own barriers in starting up a business and we are in the process of looking into how they can be better supported through providing access to childcare, offering hybrid access to the service with both in person and online events/training and mentoring. ('Autism or Asperger syndrome' as a listed health condition and 35,000 people were recorded with this condition. Of this, 19,000 children (or one child in twenty) had 'Autism or Asperger syndrome' recorded.) NIESS will be flexible to the varying needs of individuals.

8. What is the likely impact (indicate if the policy impact is positive or negative) on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? What is the level of impact?

Section 75 category	Likely impact?	Level of impact? Minor/Major/None
Religious belief	There is no data available which indicates a positive or negative difference between groups of different religious belief. All programmes are open to all Section 75 groups to attend and with the aim to promote and support enterprise and business activity, any impacts are likely to be positive.	None
Political opinion	No data available which indicates a positive or negative difference between groups of different political opinion	None
Racial group	<p>In the UK, the self-employment rate among the migrant population is slightly higher than the UK-born population. However, the UUEPC report on under-represented groups states that ethnic minorities face certain barriers in terms of money, markets and management. Increasing awareness of the programmes through the Migrant Forum and the provision of additional supports such as translation services, qualification mapping to the NQF is likely to have a positive impact on those from different racial groups.</p> <p>Support will include the provision of interpreters if required.</p> <p>As part of NIESS, each Council will complete an Annual Service Plan which incorporates identified needs within the Council area for specific ethnic minority groups. This will take into account socio-economic climate and the business eco-system within each Council area, as each will have distinct characteristics. Councils will engage where appropriate with their Good Relations units to support this work</p>	Minor
Age	<p>Individuals aged 16 plus are targeted for our start-up programmes. There is no maximum age limit. However, the evidence from UUEPC suggests that the self-employment rates for young people (15-24, or 18-30) are generally much lower than for the total working age population.</p> <p>According to GEM 2019, majority of people starting a business are between 25 and 44. After the age of 44, the level of start-ups drops significantly down, which also means that there should be a support for young people in business and those over 44.</p>	Minor

Marital status	No data available which indicates a positive or negative difference.	None
Sexual orientation	No data available which indicates a positive or negative difference.	None
Men and women generally	<p>Women in Northern Ireland publication 2020, found the number of employees in NI was evenly split between males and females in 2019, though the number of self-employed males was more than double the number of self-employed females.</p> <p>Specific supports for women will be available within the NIESS.</p>	Minor (positive)
Disability	<p>According to the UUEPC, there is limited data on self-employment by disabled people. Some data suggests that disabled men are more likely to be self-employed than disabled women. However, research indicates that people with disabilities are likely to face more barriers to enterprise. Tailored support and increased awareness raising of business start support and programmes is likely to have a positive impact.</p>	Minor (positive)
Dependants	<p>No data available which indicates a positive or negative difference between groups with dependents. However, people with caring responsibilities tend to face more barriers and ESS is working towards addressing those.</p>	Minor (positive)

9. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?

Section 75 category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief	<p>Information is disseminated via many different social media channels, Council websites, e-shots to mailing lists, occasional radio advertising and advertising to ensure all communities across the region are aware of the Service regardless of their religious belief.</p> <p>Equality of opportunity will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.</p>	<p>People of different religious beliefs are likely to benefit equally: there is no perceived impact on equality of opportunity.</p>
Political opinion		<p>There is no perceived impact on equality of opportunity.</p>
Racial group	<p>Language and translation services are available to ensure those whose first language is not English can access programmes. There is an opportunity to promote this support more widely and via the targeted channels.</p> <p>The Service will have provision of interpreters.</p> <p>Equality of opportunity will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.</p>	
Age	<p>There is scope to target our marketing campaigns for programmes to target specific age groups to encourage participation.</p> <p>Equality of opportunity will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.</p>	
Marital status		<p>People of different marital status are likely to benefit equally: there is no perceived impact on equality of opportunity.</p>
Sexual orientation		<p>People of different sexual orientation are likely to benefit equally: there is no perceived impact on equality of opportunity.</p>

Men and women generally	<p>As outlined previously, women are underrepresented with regards to enterprise; there is scope to tailor some of our programmes to specifically target women.</p> <p>Equality of opportunity will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.</p>	
Disability	<p>There is evidence that disabled people are underrepresented when it comes to enterprise so the service will aim to be more proactive with people with disabilities and include them in the programmes. Accessible venues are used for our programmes. The Councils' inclusive events guide will also be introduced in our contracts. NIESS will consult with Disability Action and other umbrella groups.</p> <p>The Service will have provision of interpreters/ BSL signers and make other reasonable adjustments as required.</p> <p>The team will also work with DfC to understand changes to welfare reform and impacts. Equality of opportunity will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.</p>	
Dependants	<p>There is an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity especially for those with caring responsibilities by putting in place additional supports that help to address the barriers in accessing programmes, i.e., childcare arrangements, running programmes at different times.</p> <p>ESS will promote equality of opportunity and good relations are addressed and communicated throughout our programmes.</p>	

10. To what extent is the policy likely to impact (positive or negatively) on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? What is the level of impact?

Good relations category	Likely impact?	Level of impact? Minor/Major/None
Religious belief	<p>Programmes are open to everyone over 16 regardless of their religious belief. This encourages those of different religious beliefs to meet and develop, therefore promoting good relations between people of different religious beliefs.</p>	Positive Minor
Political opinion	<p>Data on political opinion is not monitored, but the service is inclusive of people with different political opinions. Programmes are designed for those 16plus from various backgrounds, religious beliefs and political opinions, they are mixed and is therefore likely to provide an opportunity</p>	Positive Minor

	to promote good relations.	
Racial group	Programmes are designed for those 16plus from various backgrounds, religious beliefs and political opinions, they are mixed and is therefore likely to provide an opportunity to promote good relations.	Positive Minor

11. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good relations category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief	Programmes are designed to be inclusive but by delivering the programmes in different locations across the region, there may be an opportunity to promote good relations	
Political opinion	As above, programmes are designed to be inclusive and by delivering the programmes in different locations across the region, there may be an opportunity to promote good relations	
Racial group	As above, programmes are designed to be inclusive and by delivering the programmes in different locations across the region, there may be an opportunity to promote good relations	

Section C

All Councils have legislative obligations to meet under the **Disability Discrimination Order** and Questions 12-13 relate to these two areas.

Consideration of Disability Duties

12. Does this proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity for the Councils to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

As part of the new governance structure, the NIESS working group will seek to establish a forum which includes representatives across a range of enterprise and business support organisations, including those umbrella organisations that engage directly with underrepresented groups. This will include representatives from organisations that engage with people with disabilities who can assist with providing opportunities for the Councils to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people. This engagement is important to ensure that the needs of individuals with a disability are factored into initiatives. As part of this engagement, information is regularly distributed on programmes which is distributed to disability support groups. The NIESS has also put in place tailored awareness initiatives to encourage individuals with a disability to consider starting a business as well as support to enable growth. All meetings, workshops and events will be held in venues across the region that are accessible. We will ensure full accessibility to this service by providing information in alternative formats, easy read and/or large font information as required. Reasonable adjustments will be addressed as appropriate.

13. Does this proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity to actively increase the participation by disabled people in public life?

Yes. Marketing activity targeted at individuals with a disability will be enhanced. Individuals who have previously participated in support will be offered the opportunity to become a role model to further increase participation.

14. Multiple Identities

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy with multiple identities

It is unclear based on the research available, but it is likely that women with disabilities and caring responsibilities are likely to face multiple barriers.

In addition, it is recognised that the cumulative impact of multiple sources of disadvantage – low incomes, benefit dependency, low skills levels and qualifications – are likely to combine together to impact on an individual's opportunity and capacity to participate in business start-up/growth programmes.

Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

15. Monitoring Arrangements

Section 75 places a requirement Councils to have equality monitoring arrangements in place to assess the impact of policies and services etc; and to help identify barriers to fair participation and to better promote equality of opportunity.

Outline what data you will collect in the future to monitor the impact of this policy / decision on equality, good relations and disability duties.

Equality	Good Relations	Disability Duties
Information will be collated by delivery partners/All Councils through the CRM system and reported to Belfast City Council as lead partner on a six-monthly basis. This will enable close monitoring of the programme in the initial stages and timescales can be reviewed as the programme progresses.	Information will be collated by delivery partners/ All Councils through the CRM system and reported to Belfast City Council as lead partner on a six-monthly basis. This will enable close monitoring of the programme in the initial stages and timescales can be reviewed as the programme progresses. emerge.	Ensure there are no physical barriers for disabled people in accessing events and programmes, so they can participate fully. Participation levels of disabled residents and take-up levels of accessing support. Information will be collated by delivery partners/All Councils through the CRM system and reported to Belfast City Council on a six-monthly basis This will enable close monitoring of the programme in the initial stages and timeframes can be reviewed as the programme progresses.
Complaints to be considered (across all Council areas)	Complaints to be considered (across all Council areas)	Complaints to be considered (across all Council areas)
Unusual trends will be considered and taken into account as relevant	Unusual trends will be considered and taken into account as relevant	Unusual trends will be considered and taken into account as relevant

We monitor and track engagement on all activity; however, the main purpose of this is to address operational issues. It has not been a compulsory requirement for participants to provide Section 75 data. However, to increase the level of data we are gathering through our contracts we will revise the Equality Monitoring Form to ensure that the data we are gathering is relevant and the form is user friendly and easy to complete. It is envisaged that this data will be collected electronically at the initial contact stage. All data will be anonymized at the point of collection. This will enable us to compare/measure the impact of the NIESS on underrepresented groups across the region, specifically in each Council area.

Section D

Formal Record of Screening Decision

Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being screened
Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS)

I can confirm that the proposed policy / decision has been screened for –

x	equality of opportunity and good relations
x	disabilities duties

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy / decision is – *(place an X in the appropriate box below)*

	*Screened In – Necessary to conduct a full EQIA
--	--

	<p>*Screened Out – No EQIA necessary (no impacts)</p> <p>Provide a brief note here to explain how this decision was reached:</p> <p>N/A</p>
--	--

	<p>* Screened Out - Mitigating Actions (minor impacts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief note here to explain how this decision was reached: • Explain what mitigating actions and / or policy changes will now be introduced: <p>All impacts are minor and positive (i.e. not negative) therefore we can screen out. The NIESS will introduce an electronic monitoring system for Section 75 and review it annually across Council areas. NIESS will proactively target, young people, females, individuals with a disability, individuals with dependents, ethnic minorities and will provide access to tailored support to target the most under-represented groups.</p>
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Formal Record of Screening Decision (cont)

Screening assessment completed by (Officer level) -

Name: Sarah Rafter
Department : Place and Economy

Date: 27/06/23

Signature:



Screening decision approved by -

Name: John Greer
Department:
Place and Economy

Date: 04/07/23

Signature:



Please save the final version of the completed screening form and forward to the Equality and Diversity Officer – equality@belfastcity.gov.uk. The screening form will be placed on the BCC website and a link provided to the Council's Section 75 consultees.

For more information about equality screening contact –

Lisa McKee / Lorraine Dennis
Equality & Diversity Officer (*job-share*)
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS
Telephone: 028 9027 0511
equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

Appendix A

Committee approval

ANBC	Full Council meeting on 27 March 2023 - Item 12.6 covers ESS participation: https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/getmedia/f0b9bc8d-0f54-4359-a17f-d1253be08930/03-Redacted-Minutes-Council-Meeting-27-March-2023.pdf.aspx
ABCBC	Presented under confidential business on the 14th Feb to the Economic & Regeneration Committee, at 6.30p.m in Craigavon Civic Centre . Subsequently approved at the full Council meeting on the 27th February. Minutes available upon request
BCC	Restricted Report - Strategic Policy and Resources committee, 17th February 2023 Minutes available upon request
CCGBC	https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/minutes/230221_Leisure_and_Development_Minutes_Final_Unconfirmed.pdf
DSDC	http://meetings.derrycityandstrabanedistrict.com/mgAi.aspx?ID=33275
F&ODC	Minutes available upon request Approval granted : Regeneration and Community Committee, Tuesday 14 February 2023 at 7.00pm Location: The Grange, Omagh
LCCC	Title of Committee Item: 'New Entrepreneurship Support Service proposals – UK Shared Prosperity Fund' LCCC Restricted: Confidential Committee Item Date: 2 March 2023 – Lagan Valley Island Availability: On request
MEABC	Restricted Report Monday 20 February 2023 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena and via remote access. Minutes available upon request
MUDC	Approved under closed business by Council's Development Committee on 16 February 2023 – and ratified by Council - 23 Feb 2023
NMDDC	minutes enterprise regeneration tourism committee minutes 16 january 2023 .pdf (newrymournedown.org)
ANDBC	Restricted Report – Place and Prosperity Committee Meeting was 5th January 2023 at 7pm, Minutes available upon request.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment Template (RNIA)

Section 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

1A. Name of Public Authority

Belfast City Council as Lead for 11 Council Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS)

This Rural needs Impact Assessment is for the regional (NIESS) and considers each Council's needs. It will be at the discretion of individual Councils as to whether local screening exercises need to take place. The NIESS aligns to the Programme for Government, 10x Economic Strategy, DfE Economic Recovery Action Plan, City & Growth Deals, and the Community Plans of local Councils. Since 2015, Councils have been responsible for economic development, including responsibility for supporting business start-ups and the growth of micro/small businesses. NIESS will support the Councils to deliver on statutory responsibilities for delivering enterprise and business start-up support.

1B. Please provide a short title, which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to the Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

The new Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) aims to deliver a connected enterprise support service that enables individuals and businesses to access the relevant support services to meet their needs and the growth ambitions of their businesses.

1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.

Developing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Adopting a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Revising a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Designing a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Delivering a Public Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan for Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS)

1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

The key objectives of the NI Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) is aligned to the 10x Economic Strategy, Programme for Government, DFE Economic Recovery Action Plan, City & Growth Deals, and the Community Plans of local Councils, in particular:

- Creating employment and opportunity,
- Fostering business growth,
- Strengthening business relationships and making it easy to do business,
- Reducing economic inequalities,
- Addressing barriers to employment at structural and personal levels,
- Addressing educational inequalities and increasing skills attainment,
- Reducing poverty and economic inactivity,
- "Bridging" local need with regional/national policy.

The NIESS will provide an offer than can meet future ambitions whilst ensuring an inclusive approach, where local ecosystems in each Local Government District will be able to cater for a diverse range of entrepreneurs and enterprise types.

Delivery of the NIESS will consist of 4 key elements representing a continuum of support that will be required from pre-start support, through start-up and the growth journey thereafter. The support aims to engage with 22,050 individuals/businesses at its peak.

Whilst this is a regional service, Belfast City Council have led on the development of the service and are the nominated lead Council for the ongoing development and delivery. As such, BCC will lead on procurement for the service with each individual Council contributing to ensure the service meets the local needs of each Council. There are four proposed elements of provision:

<p>ENGAGE - Early aspiration and support (for would be entrepreneurs)</p>	<p><i>Reaching 12,000 per annum and working more intensively with c3.5K per annum to refine and support a start-up idea. To achieve a minimum of 1,500 individuals achieving a wider range of start-up outcomes, outside of formal business registration data as well as a range of other impacts.</i></p>
<p>FOUNDATION - Support for early founding (employer enterprises/ start-ups)</p>	<p><i>To work with c1,200 individuals/ businesses per annum to work towards target of 750 registered start-ups</i></p>
<p>ENABLING GROWTH – Aligned to aspirations and potential</p>	<p><i>To work with c4000 businesses per annum arising both from the start-up pool above and entry of existing businesses from LGDs that meet eligibility criteria</i></p>
<p>ACCELERATED SCALING - for start-ups typically over 2 years old</p>	<p><i>To work with 10 organisations to achieve the indicative target of 30 by 5 years</i></p>

Section 2 – Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section 2E.

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The NIESS is expected to impact -positively all those who live in, work in, study, invest in or visit Northern Ireland. It will specifically target individuals with entrepreneurial intentions or those who haven't considered entrepreneurship (particularly those in underrepresented groups), those interested in starting a business or becoming self-employed, and existing businesses across the region.

It is likely to impact rural communities positively as it enables equal access to support service.

Supporting individuals and businesses located in rural areas may require an adjusted delivery to meet specific rural needs.

2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

It is unlikely that the NIESS will impact the rural communities differently as the programme will be delivered to all areas with mixed delivery for some elements of the programme. Councils have invested in digital infrastructure to ensure that digital services are available across the whole Region and that rural areas are serviced. This, coupled with wider regional programmes such as Project Stratum, increases accessibility for participants. The programme will propose in-person/online activities and events that can be rotated across areas to ensure that rural communities have equal access to such services.

The NI Entrepreneur Support Service will have the same beneficial impact on both the rural and urban areas. The support service is open to individuals and businesses, regardless of geography or background. The service will be made available to enable access to all within the Councils' areas. Services will also be offered online to help people overcome barriers of attending in person if this is not option. Where broadband issues arise, individuals or businesses will be signposted to the closest

available wi-fi centres or in person events. The service will also be flexible in terms of appointments so that individuals or businesses can work around transport and/or childcare constraints.

(Recent positives in terms of Digital delivery below)

[Link to Ofcom Report DEC 22](#)

The Northern Ireland Executive, in partnership with Ofcom, has committed to addressing the disparity in the proportion of NI premises unable to receive a 'superfast' service. The Project Stratum initiative is currently being undertaken by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to improve access to fast, reliable broadband in rural areas, as outlined in Outcome 11 in the draft Programme for Government. The project is funded by £150m from the UK Government and £15m from the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

In terms of digital connectivity, NI having the highest availability of full fibre services of the four devolved administrations (85%) compared to England (41%), Scotland (41%) and Wales (40%).

Superfast broadband (at least 30 Mbit/s), is available to 94% of premises in Northern Ireland, 3 percentage points higher than last year.

Average broadband download speeds in Northern Ireland have increased by 40% to 115 Mbit/s, up from 82 Mbit/s in 2021, and reflects increasing availability and take-up of faster broadband services. Average download speeds are lower in rural areas but have increased to 68 Mbit/s in 2022, compared to 50 Mbit/s in 2021.

One of the main difficulties for broadband users in rural areas, is achieving high enough speeds for basic use. There has been a trend of decline from 2016 to 2022 in the proportion of properties unable to achieve a minimum acceptable speed in rural areas. As of December 2022, just 1% of rural properties do not have access to decent broadband from either a fixed or FWA network.

2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.

- Rural Businesses
- Rural Tourism
- Rural Housing
- Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas
- Education or Training in Rural Areas
- Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas
- Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas
- Poverty in Rural Areas
- Deprivation in Rural Areas

Rural Crime or Community Safety

Rural Development

Agri-Environment

Other (Please state)

If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A

2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.

N/A

Section 3 – Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Yes No If the response is NO GO TO Section 3E.

3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			<input type="checkbox"/>

3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

The Service have been informed and shaped by research and consultation. In addition to the specific research for the service it has also been shaped through local intelligence at an individual Council level, and through previous experience of delivering enterprise support programmes.

Specific research includes:

- <https://www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org/>
- Belfast City Council Labour Market Partnership Strategic Assessment
- Interim Local Rural Development Strategy for Ards and North Down – Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme, 2014-2020
- Big Plan Part II
- <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/community-planning/collecting-the-evidence>
- <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/community-planning/the-big-conversation-panel>
- Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/news/new-ni-multiple-deprivation-measures-2017-lookup-tool#:~:text=The%20updated%20NIMDM%202017%20were%20published%20on%2023,along%20with%20an%20overall%20multiple%20deprivation%20measure%20%28MDM%29>.
- Ards and North Down District Council -Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development, 2018-2030.
- https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/downloads/Integrated_Tourism_Regeneration_Economic_Development_Strategy_2018-2030_v2.pdf
- Data captured through regional Go For It programme
- UUEPC - Maximising potential: A review of labour market outcomes for people with disabilities in Northern Ireland https://www.ulster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1275811/Disability-and-the-labour-market.pdf
- UUEPC and FSB – Business start-up support in Northern Ireland; a critical review and future perspectives https://www.ulster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/831226/Back-to-the-Start-up-Full-Report.pdf
- UUEPC – Regional Analysis of under-represented groups engaged in entrepreneurship: 2017
- GEM – Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Northern Ireland Report 2021 <https://www.gemconsortium.org/report/global-entrepreneurship-monitor-northern-ireland-report-20212022>
- NMD Labour Market Partnership Strategic Assessment (available upon request to business@nmandd.org)
- BRCD – Decade of Opportunity [Belfast Region City Deal](#)
- A Socio-Economic Profile of the Fermanagh and Omagh District co-authored by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Ulster University Economic Policy Centre - www.fermanaghomagh.com/your-council/keystatisticsanddata/your-council-projects/

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority

More than a third (36%) of Northern Ireland's (NI) population lives in a rural area. Despite similarities in many aspects of urban and rural life, there are also challenges which tend to be more pronounced in rural areas outside of Belfast.

The nature of rural industry and employment differs from that of towns and cities.

Difficulties with access to services, and issues with connectivity, social and digital, tend to have a disproportionate impact on rural dwellers. The programme delivery structure will be developed in recognition of these issues. The service will be delivered via a hybrid approach and therefore offers flexibility and ease of access to participants and will include support for females, young people and grant support for eligible rural micro-businesses and SME's, to assist with sustainability and growth. Rural enterprises will also be supported in respect of embracing digital technologies.

Delivery of DAERA Rural Development Investment Schemes have sought to increase economic activity and employment rates within the wider rural economy by encouraging and supporting the creation and development of micro and smaller enterprises including on-farm diversification into non-agricultural activities and tourism.

Local consultation and analysis through Councils indicate issues/priorities for rural dwellers include:

- Access to services
- Digital Connectivity
- Demand for Rural Housing
- Opportunities for young people
- Opportunities for women
- Social Inclusion
- Job Creation/Increased employment rates
- Poverty Reduction
- Rural business sustainability

This is similar to the findings of DAERA in their Key Rural Issues 2020 report that found:

- Rural workers (91%) are also much more likely to use private transport to commute than those from urban areas (74%)
- Broadband speed and availability, though improving, is still much lower in rural than in urban areas
- Access to public transport in rural areas is much lower than that in towns and cities - journey times to key services by car are on average twice as long for rural dwellers

Source: DAERA Key Rural Issues 2020

The 11 Councils that are partners in this Service, as created in the reform of Local Government in 2015, were given the responsibility of leading the community planning process for their district. All Councils now have Community Plans in place as a result of extensive consultations/research undertaken with their local communities and are currently in implementation and oversight/ monitoring mode. Therefore, it is important as part of the sub-regional policy context to also review how the service will help reinforce the ambition within these Community Plans. The plans are all shaped around delivering against priority outcomes for their districts – and all have a focus/ theme on enabling inclusive economic growth in their district which means that levels of support may need to be differentiated to reflect local needs including rural communities.

There is a strong focus for Councils to ensure that their local support ecosystems can cater for a wide range of entrepreneurs and enterprise types. As such, it will contribute strongly to the economic imperatives and related outcomes in the Community Plans in each of the Councils.

The NIESS will also complement all 11 Councils current Corporate and Economic Departmental strategies which have a key focus on growing an inclusive economy, encouraging business start-ups, growth ambitions and creating new opportunities for our residents both rural and urban.

If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

N/A

Section 4 – Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Issues considered in relation to the socio-economic needs of people in rural areas include promotion, access to support services/training etc, adjustments to delivery to facilitate attendance for young people, older people, women, etc who may live in rural areas and experience travel challenges, childcare challenges, etc. Providing support via a variety of means – online, in person, hybrid, different locations, timing etc, have been considered.

Section 5 – Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes No If the response is **NO GO TO Section 5C.**

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified?

The core nature of the programme has not been influenced significantly by rural needs but consideration of the specific issues that may affect individuals and businesses in rural areas allow adjustments to be made to the modes of delivery to ensure equal access and participation.

Further consideration/ongoing evaluation will be given to each element of the service to ensure that the programme reacts and responds to issues and needs at a local level, both in rural and urban communities.

The service will be delivered to all areas with an emphasis on online delivery for some elements of the programme. Councils have invested in digital infrastructure in order to ensure that digital services are available across the whole region and that rural areas are serviced. The programme will propose in person activities and events that can be rotated across the region to ensure that rural communities have equal access to such services. The service will be made available to enable access to all within all Council areas. Services will also be offered online to help people overcome barriers of attending in person if this is not an option. Where broadband issues arise, individuals or businesses will be signposted to the closest available wi-fi centres. The service will also be flexible in terms of appointments so that individuals or businesses can work around transport and/or childcare issues.

If the response to Section 5A was YES GO TO Section 6A

5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.

N/A

SECTION 6 – Documenting and Recording

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information compiled.



Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Sarah Rafter
Position / Grade:	EDA
Division / Branch:	Enterprise and Business Growth - Place and Economy
Signature:	
Date:	08/06/2023
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	John Greer
Position / Grade:	Director
Division / Branch:	Place and Economy
Signature:	
Date:	04/07/2023