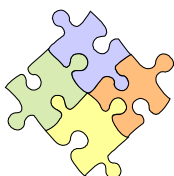


Equality Impact Assessment Final Report

**“What will be the impact of HMRC’s proposals
to reshape its use of office buildings in
the Belfast Area?”**

This report outlines the decisions HMRC has made on estate changes within the Belfast urban centre and the action HMRC will take to mitigate equality impacts arising as a result of these changes.



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1 Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 In November 2006, HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) announced a nationwide programme of reviews designed to help modernise its operations by restructuring its office accommodation in line with future business needs.
- 1.2 Based on current staff forecasts, HMRC has more office space than it needs in the Belfast area and on 19 September 2007 proposals were published for rationalising the estate to meet future business need. Within HMRC consultation took place with staff and unions. Local Authorities, MPs and MLAs were also invited to comment.
- 1.3 At the same time, and in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and discussions with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was published, launching public consultation on the equality impacts arising from the proposals to nine equality groups¹. The EQIA highlighted equality impacts identified by HMRC and asked the public to comment on:
 - Whether these impacts been correctly identified
 - What additional impacts might arise as a result of the proposals
 - How any adverse impacts could be reduced.

On 24 January 2008 a Summary of Consultation Responses was published.

- 1.4 Responses to the EQIA agreed the main equality impacts originally identified by HMRC and highlighted several further impacts which are included in this report.

Decisions

- 1.5 In arriving at the decisions for the Belfast urban centre, HMRC has carefully considered all potential equality issues raised through the public EQIA consultation along with the responses from the internal consultation with staff and unions, and comments received from MPs, MLAs and local authorities have also been taken into account. These responses were taken into account as part of the overarching feasibility study, which evaluated other critical factors such as the likely impact of IT and estates planning.
- 1.6 The initial proposal was to reduce nine existing HMRC office buildings to six, withdrawing from Moira House in Lisburn and Olivetree House and Windsor House in Belfast and retaining Crown Buildings in Antrim and Beaufort House, Carne House, Custom House, Dorchester House and Millennium House in Belfast. As a result of consultation and feasibility studies the original proposal has changed and HMRC will now retain Moira House in Lisburn and withdraw from Olivetree House and Windsor House in Belfast. As some staff will still be expected to relocate from and to Moira House, the potential equality impacts identified will continue to be relevant.

¹ Persons of different Racial Groups, Gender, Age, Marital Status, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Beliefs, Political Opinion, Those with and without a Disability, Those with and without Dependents

- 1.7 For a list of the buildings, including addresses see Appendix A.
- 1.8 Enquiry centre services to the public will be retained in their current locations. The three existing Enquiry Centres are identified in Appendix B.

Mitigating Action

- 1.9 HMRC has a number of policies² and arrangements in place, which will assist in mitigating adverse equality impacts arising to staff as a result of the estate changes. These include:
- Flexible working hours and alternative working patterns³
 - Provision of reasonable adjustments for disabled staff
 - HMRC Childcare Voucher Scheme
 - Specialist and confidential counselling and support for staff from specialist teams in HMRC such as Business People and Support Team
 - Staff to be relocated to the offices within reasonable daily travel⁴
 - Daily Travel Allowance
 - Discussions between managers and staff to identify any personal issues arising and establish reasonable solutions where appropriate, with assistance and support of HR specialists
 - A programme of relocation support initiatives for staff who are unable to relocate with their current team. These include job moves to other business areas, CV and interview skills support, relocation to Other Government Departments, early and flexible retirement schemes.

² See Appendix C for more details on HMRC Policies

³ See Appendix E for more details on Flexible Working Patterns

⁴ See Appendix D for more details on Reasonable Daily Travel

2 The Belfast Urban Centre Review

- 2.1 The formation of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on 18 April 2005 provided an opportunity to co-locate teams and deliver major improvements in performance across the full range of HMRC activities, whilst taking the opportunity to review existing and future office accommodation requirements and make estate savings, as appropriate.
- 2.2 In November 2006, HMRC announced the Regional Review Programme; a programme designed to consider estate requirements on a regional basis. The programme initially considered HMRC offices within key large towns or cities within a 25km 'ring' of a city centre across the UK known as "urban centres". These offices account for 75% of HMRC staff. Work has begun on the review of offices in less populated areas known as "clusters" and "individual locations" and once the early diagnostic work has been completed, HMRC will publish proposals on estate changes throughout the remaining areas of the UK, including Northern Ireland.
- 2.3 In considering estate requirements for the Belfast urban centre, HMRC identified that it has more office space than it needs and proposed to reduce the number of office buildings from nine to six. This proposal was based on staffing projections, which suggested that the number of staff required in the Belfast area would reduce from the current 1,700 to 1,600 by 2010. HMRC expected this reduction to come from natural attrition, early retirement schemes and restricted recruitment. No job losses were expected as a direct result of the proposal to change the Belfast estate.
- 2.4 The six buildings proposed for retention were Crown Buildings in Antrim and Beaufort House, Carne House, Custom House, Dorchester House and Millennium House in Belfast. The three buildings proposed for vacation were Moira House in Lisburn and Olivetree House and Windsor House in Belfast. A list of the buildings, including addresses is at Appendix A.
- 2.5 However, based on the latest staffing forecasts, HMRC now expects its staffing requirement for the Belfast area in 2011 to remain at around the same level as the current staffing of 1,700. Taking this, staff and public consultation and detailed feasibility work all into account, HMRC now intends to retain Moira House in Lisburn.
- 2.6 As stated in the proposals, HMRC will continue to provide enquiry centre services from existing locations. All other specialist sites will also be retained. The three existing Enquiry Centres are identified in Appendix B.
- 2.7 Work on identifying the best options for relocating staff has taken into account factors such as where business units would like their employees situated, the impact on the employees moving, how much each building costs to run and its capacity to accommodate additional employees, as well as contractual obligations. The buildings to be retained offer longer term, more flexible accommodation to enable business units to co-locate their teams better, as well as increasing the variety of job opportunities available to our employees. Some reorganisation would be needed to make the best use of space.

3 Equality Impacts Identified

3.1 Racial Groups

3.1.1 HMRC collects data on the racial groups of staff via its internal HR systems. Completion of this data is optional and data may therefore be incomplete.

Ethnicity Data Considered				
Location	White %	Ethnic Minority %	Chose Not To Declare	Not known %
HMRC Employees in Antrim, Belfast and Lisburn offices ⁵	66.0	1.0	2.0	31.0
Northern Ireland population ⁶	99.2	0.8		-
Antrim core catchment population ⁷	99.0	1.0		-
Belfast core catchment population	98.6	1.4		-
Lisburn core catchment population	99.1	0.9		-

3.1.2 HMRC acknowledges the need to improve the staff completion rate of internal diversity data in order to more accurately identify and monitor equality impacts of changes implemented.

Equality impacts identified by HMRC

3.1.3 The HMRC staff ethnicity data held shows that 99% of staff are white and 1% are from an ethnic minority group, a finding which is representative of the general population of Northern Ireland.

3.1.4 HMRC identified that employees of different racial groups may experience a change in support networks and facilities available if relocated to an alternative building.

THE EQIA CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ASKED
1. Have the impacts to persons of different racial groups been correctly identified?
2. What additional impacts arise as a result of the proposal and how can related risks be reduced?

Additional equality impacts identified through the EQIA consultation process

3.1.5 Feedback indicated that increasing numbers of Eastern European migrants moving to Northern Ireland are using the enquiry centre services and that any reduction in services provided would impact on this group.

3.1.6 Concerns were raised about the proposed closure of the Lisburn office and the potential adverse impact this may have had on customer service if the Enquiry Centre was also to close. A high volume of migrant workers visit this Enquiry Centre and depend on the face-to-face services they receive there.

⁵ HMRC HR data as at 1/03/08

⁶ Census 2001 data, KS02

⁷ Experian Data

Mitigating action

- 3.1.7 HMRC will continue to provide all current enquiry centre services from existing locations or nearby and, as a result, there is no adverse impact expected on customers from different racial groups.
- 3.1.8 HMRC managers will discuss with staff any personal issues arising as a result of relocating offices in order to identify adverse impacts and mitigating action required.
- 3.1.9 HMRC will continue to work to improve the staff completion rate of internal diversity data and will monitor the equality impacts arising on racial groups as a result of implementing the changes. Adverse impacts will be identified through the discussions between managers and staff, the grievance process and the appeals process in place within the Regional Review Programme.

3.2 Those with or without a disability

- 3.2.1 HMRC collects data on staff disability via its internal HR systems. Completion of this data is optional and data may therefore be incomplete.

Disability Data Considered				
Location	Disabled %	Not disabled %	Chose Not To declare	Not known %
HMRC Employees in Antrim, Belfast and Lisburn offices ⁸	7.0	39.0	1.0	53.0
Northern Ireland population ⁹	37.5	62.5		-
Antrim core catchment population ¹⁰	9.9	90.1		-
Belfast core catchment population	13.1	86.9		-
Lisburn core catchment population	9.5	90.5		-

- 3.2.2 HMRC acknowledges the need to improve the staff completion rate of internal diversity data in order to more accurately identify and monitor equality impacts of changes implemented.

Equality impacts identified by HMRC

- 3.2.3 Of the staff who have provided disability information in the Belfast area, 16% are disabled and 84% are non-disabled. This is below the census figure for disabled people in Northern Ireland.
- 3.2.4 HMRC is aware that the impacts on those with a disability are dependent on personal circumstances. HMRC has identified that adverse equality impacts may arise in the following circumstances.
- Changes in home to office journeys, where public transport is unavailable or unsuitable.
 - If reasonable adjustments and specialist requirements are not available immediately at new office location.

⁸ HMRC HR data as at 1/03/08

⁹ Census 2001 data: Households with limiting long-term illness, KS08

¹⁰ Experian data: Not good health

- Unavailability of specialist IT software, or incompatibility with HMRC software, when moving into a new work area.
- Long travelling times to training courses or residential training courses is required.
- Non-existent disabled parking availability at new office for disabled staff and customers.
- Enquiry Centre relocation where public transport services are not close by for disabled customers.

THE EQIA CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ASKED

1. Have the impacts to persons with or without a disability been correctly identified?
2. What additional impacts arise as a result of the proposal and how can related risks be reduced?

Additional equality impacts identified through the EQIA consultation process

- 3.2.5 Feedback from one external organisation focused on customers with learning difficulties and highlighted that those people would find telephoning Contact Centres or using the internet very difficult. This organisation confirmed that people with learning difficulties prefer face-to-face advice and enquiry centre services should continue to be provided.
- 3.2.6 A recommendation was made to consider home working where possible for members of HMRC staff with a disability.
- 3.2.7 A recommendation was made that staff and managers should receive training to raise awareness of disability issues.

Mitigating action

- 3.2.8 HMRC will continue to provide all current enquiry centre services from existing locations or nearby and, as a result, there is no adverse impact expected on customers with a disability.
- 3.2.9 HMRC will continue to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) as this relates to both customers and staff.
- 3.2.10 HMRC managers will discuss with staff any personal issues arising as a result of relocating offices in order to identify adverse impacts and mitigating action required. Managers understand the need to handle these issues sensitively and reasonable solutions will be discussed and considered with the support of HR, accommodation and IT specialists.
- 3.2.11 Employees will not be expected to travel outside of reasonable daily travel¹¹.
- 3.2.12 HMRC will continue to work to improve the staff completion rate of internal diversity data and will monitor the equality impacts arising on persons with a

¹¹ See Appendix D for more details on Reasonable Daily Travel

disability as a result of implementing the changes. Adverse impacts will be identified and addressed through the discussions between managers and staff, the grievance process and the appeals process in place within the Regional Review Programme.

3.2.13 Home working will be considered by HMRC where appropriate.

3.2.14 HMRC will ensure that Diversity awareness training is provided where appropriate.

3.3 Gender

3.3.1 HMRC collects data on staff disability via its internal HR systems.

Gender Data considered		
Location	Male %	Female %
HMRC Employees in Antrim, Belfast and Lisburn offices ¹²	45.0	55.0
Northern Ireland population ¹³	48.7	51.3
Antrim core catchment population	48.8	51.2
Belfast core catchment population	47.2	52.8
Lisburn core catchment population	48.7	51.3

Equality impacts identified by HMRC

3.3.2 HMRC employs a higher proportion of female employees than male, which is reflective of the local population. Of the employees in Antrim, Belfast and Lisburn 20% are employed on a part-time contract and 89% of these staff are female.

3.3.3 It is expected that most of the female, part-time staff employees will have care responsibilities and the potential impacts and issues or concerns raised by respondents on those with dependants is reported later in this document.

3.3.4 Transgender employees may experience changes in support networks/facilities as a result of relocation.

THE EQIA CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ASKED

1. Have the impacts to persons of different gender been correctly identified?
2. What additional impacts arise as a result of the proposal and how can related risks be reduced?

¹² HMRC HR data as at 1/03/08

¹³ Census 2001 data: KS01

Additional equality impacts identified through the EQIA consultation process

- 3.3.5 It was highlighted that 60% of women who work full-time in Northern Ireland are employed by the public sector.
- 3.3.6 Concerns were raised that closure of the Lisburn Office might have had an adverse impact on the work/life balance of some female part-time workers, due to extra time spent travelling as a result of relocation.

Mitigating action

- 3.3.7 HMRC managers will discuss with staff any personal issues arising as a result of relocating offices in order to identify adverse impacts and mitigating action required. Reasonable solutions, such as changes to working hours and working patterns will be discussed and considered with the support of HR specialists.
- 3.3.8 HMRC employees will not be expected to travel outside of reasonable daily travel¹⁴.
- 3.3.9 HMRC will monitor adverse impacts on persons of different gender through the discussions between managers and staff, the grievance process and the appeals process within the Regional Review Programme.

3.4 Age

- 3.4.1 HMRC collects data on staff disability via its internal HR systems.

Age Data considered			
Location	% aged 0 – 19	% aged 20 - 59	% aged 60+
HMRC Employees in Antrim, Belfast and Lisburn offices ¹⁵	0.4	97.9	1.7
Northern Ireland population ¹⁶	9.7	52.7	17.6
Antrim core catchment population	22.3	54.5	23.2
Belfast core catchment population	29.0	53.0	18.0
Lisburn core catchment population	26.6	55.0	18.4

Equality impacts identified by HMRC

- 3.4.2 Should approved early retirement schemes be available to HMRC employees in the Belfast area, these will be voluntary. Release of staff under such schemes may impact on the age demographics in the area.
- 3.4.3 HMRC is aware that elderly customers may be adversely impacted if an Enquiry Centre is relocated and the new location is not easily accessible by public transport services or does not have adequate customer car parking facilities.

¹⁴ See Appendix D for more details on Reasonable Daily Travel

¹⁵ HMRC HR data as at 1/03/08

¹⁶ Census 2001 data: KS02

THE EQIA CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ASKED

1. Have the impacts to persons of different age been correctly identified?
2. What additional impacts arise as a result of the proposal and how can related risks be reduced?

Additional equality impacts identified through the EQIA consultation process

- 3.4.4 It was suggested that staff who have been employed by HMRC for many years may find their skills are not easily marketable if forced to seek alternative employment.
- 3.4.5 External organisations highlighted the fact that a move from Antrim or Lisburn may adversely impact both young and old HMRC employees, due to longer journeys to work and increased travel times. It was suggested that younger HMRC staff would be more dependent on public transport while older employees may be working reduced hours before they retire.

Mitigating Action

- 3.4.6 HMRC will continue to provide all current enquiry centre services from existing locations or nearby and, as a result, there is no adverse impact expected on customers of different age and in particular, elderly customers.
- 3.4.7 HMRC managers will discuss with staff any personal issues arising as a result of relocating offices in order to identify adverse impacts and mitigating action required. Reasonable solutions, such as changes to working hours and working patterns will be discussed and considered with the support of HR specialists.
- 3.4.8 HMRC employees will not be expected to travel outside of reasonable daily travel¹⁷.
- 3.4.9 HMRC will monitor adverse impacts on persons of different age through the discussions between managers and staff, the grievance process and the appeals process within the Regional Review Programme.

¹⁷ See Appendix D for more details on Reasonable Daily Travel

3.5 Marital Status

3.5.1 HMRC collects data on staff disability via its internal HR systems

Marital Status Data considered				
Location	Single %	Married ¹⁸ %	Divorced/Widowed %	Unknown %
HMRC Employees in Antrim, Belfast and Lisburn offices ¹⁹	34.8	56.4	5.1	3.7
Northern Ireland population ²⁰	3.1	55.0	11.9	-
Antrim core catchment population	31.1	56.4	12.5	-
Belfast core catchment population	40.4	47.2	12.4	-
Lisburn core catchment population	29.1	58.5	12.4	-

Equality impacts identified by HMRC

3.5.2 There are no known impacts specific to marital status.

THE EQIA CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ASKED
1. Have the impacts to persons of different marital status been correctly identified?
2. What additional impacts arise as a result of the proposal and how can related risks be reduced?

Additional equality impacts identified through the EQIA consultation process

3.5.3 A concern was raised about the possible adverse impact on married persons due to potential financial hardships experienced as a result of increased travel costs brought about by moving offices.

Mitigating Action

3.5.4 HMRC managers will discuss with staff any personal issues arising as a result of relocating offices in order to identify adverse impacts and mitigating action required. Reasonable solutions, such as the provision of Daily Travel Allowance may be provided to assist with additional travel costs incurred as a result of relocation.

3.5.5 HMRC employees will not be expected to travel outside of reasonable daily travel²¹.

3.5.6 HMRC will monitor adverse impacts on persons of different marital status through the discussions between managers and staff, the grievance process and the appeals process within the Regional Review Programme.

¹⁸ Married includes those have re-married and those who may be separated, but still legally married

¹⁹ HMRC HR data as at 1/03/08

²⁰ Census 2001 data: KS04

²¹ See Appendix D for more details on Reasonable Daily Travel

3.6 Those with or without dependants

3.6.1 HMRC collects data on employees with dependants via the HMRC Staff Survey. The latest HMRC National Staff Survey, completed by 20,062 employees, was undertaken in November and December 2007.

Dependants Data Considered			
Location	With dependants %	Without dependants %	Prefer not to say
All HMRC employees ²²	40.0	54.0	6.0
Northern Ireland population ²³	36.5	63.5	-
Antrim core catchment population	36.0	64.0	-
Belfast core catchment population	33.5	66.5	-
Lisburn core catchment population	34.5	65.5	-

Equality impacts identified by HMRC

3.6.2 HMRC recognises that impacts on those with dependants will be individual and dependent on personal circumstances. Potential impacts may include the following.

- An increase in travelling times to work, which may require employees to incur additional care costs or require changes to working patterns to balance work/life commitments.
- A change in duties may require employees with dependants to change working patterns or hours to suit business needs.
- The provision of Daily Travel Allowance, paid to assist employees with additional travel costs, is taxable and impacts on tax credit entitlement.

THE EQIA CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ASKED

1. Have the impacts to persons with or without dependants been correctly identified?
2. What additional impacts arise as a result of the proposal and how can related risks be reduced?

Additional equality impacts identified through the EQIA consultation process

3.6.3 Concerns were raised that closure of the Lisburn Office might have had an adverse impact on some female staff with care responsibilities due to increased care and travel costs. These could affect their ability to meet domestic commitments and result in pressure to reduce their working hours or leave HMRC.

²² Figures from HMRC National Staff Survey 2006

²³ Figures comprise homes with dependent children, but no details held on elder care

3.6.4 Respondents made special mention of potential adverse impacts on one-parent families if increased travelling was required and additional travel costs incurred.

3.6.5 If employees were required to relocate to a more distant office this may make it difficult to meet their caring commitments to their dependants.

Mitigating Action

3.6.6 HMRC managers will discuss with staff any personal issues arising as a result of relocating offices in order to identify adverse impacts and mitigating action required. Reasonable solutions might include the opportunity to change working hours and working patterns to meet domestic commitments and the provision of Daily Travel Allowance to assist with additional travel costs.

3.6.7 HMRC employees will not be expected to travel outside of reasonable daily travel²⁴.

3.7 Sexual Orientation

3.7.1 HMRC does not collect data on the sexual orientation of staff.

3.7.2 The Northern Ireland Life and Times Surveys 2005 and 2006 questioned 1,200 and 1,230 people respectively on their sexual orientation. The responses were from a small section of the population and the lesbian, gay and bi-sexual populations are likely to be higher than the figures suggest.

Sexual Orientation Data considered		
Responses	2005 Survey %	2006 Survey %
I am "gay" or "lesbian (homosexual)	1	0
I am heterosexual	97	98
I am bi-sexual	1	0
I do not wish to answer this question	1	2

Equality impacts identified by HMRC

3.7.3 HMRC recognises that employees of different sexual orientation may experience a change in support networks and facilities available if relocated to a different building.

THE EQIA CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ASKED
1. Have the impacts to persons of different sexual orientation been correctly identified?
2. What additional impacts arise as a result of the proposal and how can related risks be reduced?

²⁴ See Appendix D for more details on Reasonable Daily Travel

Additional equality impacts identified through the EQIA consultation process

3.7.4 No issues specific to sexual orientation were raised during this consultation.

Mitigating Action

3.7.5 HMRC managers will discuss with staff any personal issues arising as a result of relocating offices in order to identify adverse impacts and mitigating action required.

3.8 Religion and Beliefs

3.8.1 HMRC does not collect data on the religion and beliefs of staff. However, information on community background is gathered.

Community Background Data considered				
Location	Protestant %	Catholic %	Other Faiths and Philosophies %	Not declared %
HMRC Employees in Antrim, Belfast and Lisburn offices ²⁵	46.0	48.0	-	6.0
Northern Ireland population ²⁶	53.1	43.8	0.4	2.7

3.8.2 Details on religious beliefs in Northern Ireland taken from the Census 2001 are as follows.

Religious Belief Data considered							
Location	Catholic %	Presbyterian Church in Ireland %	Church of Ireland %	Methodist Church in Ireland %	Other Christian %	Other Faiths and Philosophies %	No Religion or not stated %
Northern Ireland population ²⁷	40.3	20.7	15.3	3.5	6.1	0.3	13.8
Antrim core catchment population	31.5	27.5	13.7	1.9	5.0	0.6	19.8
Belfast core catchment population	47.2	15.3	12.1	4.4	4.7	0.6	15.7
Lisburn core catchment population	14.4	23.8	26.8	5.3	9.9	0.4	19.4

Equality impacts identified by HMRC

3.8.3 HMRC recognises that employees of different religion and beliefs may experience a change in support networks and facilities available if relocated to an alternative building.

3.8.4 HMRC data confirms the majority of employees currently working in our Lisburn office have a Protestant community background.

3.8.5 HMRC data confirms that the Belfast offices have reasonably even numbers of employees from Protestant and Catholic community backgrounds.

²⁵ HMRC HR data as at 01/01/08

²⁶ Census 2001 data KS07b

²⁷ Census 2001 data KS07a

- 3.8.6 Under the proposal the current Enquiry Centre services provided in Belfast would remain where they are and the Enquiry Centre services provided in Lisburn would continue to be provided from Moira House or from an alternative location nearby. Consideration will be given to accessibility of locations of enquiry centre services. The impact on customers of different religious belief is expected to be minimal.

THE EQIA CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ASKED

1. Have the impacts to persons of different religion and beliefs been correctly identified?
2. What additional impacts arise as a result of the proposal and how can related risks be reduced?

Additional equality impacts identified through the EQIA consultation process

- 3.8.7 No additional equality impacts identified, but concerns were raised on the accuracy and completeness of the data used to assess the impacts.

Mitigating Action

- 3.8.8 HMRC is satisfied that its community background data is accurate and robust. HMRC will continue to meet its obligations under the Fair Employment and Treatment Order including monitoring the community background of its staff and taking affirmative action, where necessary to maintain fair participation in its workforce by both communities.
- 3.8.9 HMRC will continue to provide all current enquiry centre services from existing locations or nearby and as a result there is no adverse impact expected on customers of different religion and beliefs.

3.9 Political Opinion

- 3.9.1 HMRC does not collect data on political opinion.

Potential equality impacts identified by HMRC

- 3.9.2 No impacts in addition to those referred to in section 3.8 under Religion and Beliefs have been identified.

THE EQIA CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ASKED

1. Have the impacts to persons of different political opinion been correctly identified?
2. What additional impacts arise as a result of the proposal and how can related risks be reduced?

Additional equality impacts identified through the EQIA consultation process

3.9.3 Concerns were raised about the proposed closure of the Lisburn office and the potential adverse impact this may have had on the balance of HMRC staff from different community backgrounds.

Mitigating Action

3.9.4 HMRC managers will discuss with staff any personal issues arising as a result of relocating offices in order to identify adverse impacts and mitigating action required.

3.9.5 HMRC will continue to meet its obligations under the Fair Employment and Treatment Order including monitoring the community background of its staff and taking affirmative action, where necessary, to maintain fair participation in its workforce by both communities.

4 What Happens Next

4.1 Improvement in internal diversity statistics

4.1.1 HMRC recognises that the voluntary completion rate of staff diversity data needs improvement and will continue to consider different strategies, which could be used to obtain more complete and accurate data.

4.1.2 Previous strategies have included messages to staff via the internal intranet and through managers' briefings. In autumn 2007 HMRC commenced an extensive exercise to encourage all HMRC staff to input their diversity information on the central electronic HR system (ERP). This exercise was actively supported by the unions ARC and PCS.

4.1.3 Whilst not mandatory, staff were asked to populate an 'Additional Diversity Data' field, which consisted of:

- Ethnic Origin
- Nationality
- Disability Status.

4.1.4 Staff are given the option to choose not to declare their ethnic origin or disability if they so wish.

4.1.5 The latest performance figures for this exercise shows that over 60% of people have entered details online regarding their ethnicity, and 48% have provided information about their disabilities. Further intranet announcements have clarified the process for staff to address some IT issues which have affected the capture of data in relation to disability type.

4.1.6 Although a substantial amount of progress has been made in improving the accuracy of the information held, HMRC is continuing in its campaign to further increase the declaration rates. This is being done through targeted communications to staff in particular locations and continual monitoring of the rates of non declaration. At all stages of the process the information provided by HMRC staff is kept confidential.

- 4.1.7 IT functionality is due to be updated in June 2008 to enable the collection of data in relation to sexual orientation of staff. Further strategies are currently being considered by HMRC Diversity & Equality specialists to take forward the collection of all diversity data.

4.2 Monitoring of equality impacts

- 4.2.1 Within the Regional Review Programme HMRC has designed a process in which managers and staff discuss the impacts arising as a result of relocation and establish reasonable solutions, where required, to mitigate adverse impacts. This takes place once decisions on offices to be retained and vacated are announced. All discussions between managers and staff are recorded and reports are drafted on the numbers of staff who are/are not able to relocate. Where the decision is that a member of staff can relocate, but they consider that this is unreasonable, they can take matters forward using the established grievance and appeals processes. Details of grievances and appeals are confidentially monitored so that impacts on equality groups can be identified early and if necessary policies, procedures and mitigating actions can be reviewed.
- 4.2.2 Diversity & Equality specialists will review HR data to identify any adverse impacts to demographics within the HMRC workforce across the UK. This monitoring will be undertaken in relation to business area and office location to identify any local impacts on the make up of the workforce.

4.3 Working with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

- 4.3.1 HMRC has taken guidance and obtained support from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) in undertaking this EQIA on the proposals for the Belfast area. HMRC will continue to work closely with ECNI in implementing the changes, which will now take place in Belfast and also on the future reviews of HMRC estate in the cluster and individual locations in Northern Ireland.

4.4 Future EQIA work on Northern Ireland proposals

- 4.4.1 As HMRC moves into the next stage of its Regional Review Programme, the estate requirements for the cluster and individual locations in Northern Ireland are being considered.
- 4.4.2 It is expected that, once the early diagnostic work has been completed, HMRC will publish proposals on estate changes throughout the remaining areas of Northern Ireland and, at the same time, undertake an EQIA on those proposals and publish a consultation document to seek public feedback on the equality issues that may arise.

Appendix A: List of Belfast Buildings and HMRC Staff Numbers

Location	HMRC Office	HMRC staff in post March 2008	Enquiry Centre services provided?
Sites to be retained			
Antrim	Crown Buildings 12-14 Castle St, Antrim BT41 4JE	3	Yes
Belfast	Beaufort House Wellington Place, Belfast BT1 6BH	285	Yes
Belfast	Carne House 20 Corry Place, Belfast BT3 9HY	234	No
Belfast	Custom House Custom House Square, Belfast BT1 3ET	303	No
Belfast	Dorchester House 52-58 Great Victoria St, Belfast BT2 7QE	543	No
Belfast	Millennium House 17-25 Great Victoria St, Belfast BT2 7BN	90	No
Lisburn	Moira House 121 Hillsborough Rd, Lisburn BT28 1LB	86	Yes
Sites for vacation			
Belfast	Olivetree House 23 Fountain St, Belfast BT1 5ES	209	No
Belfast	Windsor House 9-15 Bedford St, Belfast BT1 5ES	112	No

Appendix B: HMRC Enquiry Centres in the Belfast Urban Centre

The table below summarises 2006/07 Enquiry Centre figures for each location in the Belfast urban centre providing face to face services.

Location	Office Name	Total Callers
Antrim	Crown Buildings	406
Belfast	Beaufort House	54,290
Lisburn	Moira House	9,983

Enquiry centre services will continue to be provided at their current location or an alternative location nearby.

Appendix C: HMRC Policies

Throughout the implementation of changes within HMRC, the Department continues to employ the following policies where appropriate.

- Flexible Working Hours
- Flexibility in changing working patterns
- Approved Early Retirement
- Flexible Early Severance
- Childcare Vouchers Scheme
- Working with other government departments to identify any suitable transfers
- Consideration of home working.

Appendix D: HMRC Reasonable Daily Travel Policy

Reasonable daily travelling time is normally about 1 hour each way.

Where the travel is already more than an hour it could still be increased if this was proportionate and reasonable in the circumstances. This would particularly apply in London and in cases where the individual has chosen to live a long distance from the office.

How the time is measured will depend on what is reasonable having regard to individual circumstances and the Department's business needs. In some cases, this may be by public transport but, if the individual normally travels to work by car, it may be reasonable to work out their new travelling time on that basis. All cases will be dealt with on their merits and personal circumstances taken into account in the way described above.

Appendix E: HMRC Alternative Working Patterns

HMRC offers various options to staff considering changing their working patterns. These are.

- flexible working hours
- part-time working (including job sharing and job splitting)
- part-year working (including term time)
- distance working and home working.

Part-time working (including job sharing and job splitting)

There is no set pattern, or number of hours to a part-time working pattern. Staff and managers agree an arrangement that suits both the needs of the individual and the business. Part-time working can be permanent or temporary. Options available include.

- working fewer hours in the day
- working fewer days
- working a mixture of the above
- job sharing or job splitting.

Job Sharing

Job sharing is where, usually, two people are responsible for the whole job. Job sharing may involve sharing a desk and terminal or PC. A job can be time shared or task shared.

Job Splitting

Job splitting means that the hours of people who work part-time are matched so that between them they provide the full cover the office needs.

Part year working

Part year working allows staff to work full or part-time hours for part of the year and have a non-working period for the remainder of the year.

Distance working

Distance working means working flexibly in terms of location to achieve benefits for the Department and for distance workers making it easier for people to do jobs which involve them travelling to different locations. Distance working includes.

- home working
- mobile working
- working at more than one location
- hot desking (ie working at an available free desk within an office)
- guest working and hosting guest workers.
