

DFC Budget 2023/24 EQIA Consultation

RCN Zoom Workshop

31.05.23

Background

- Secretary of state set the budget in absence of an Executive 27.04.23
- Civil servants in NI Departments are now releasing Equality Impact Assessments to consult on impacts on S75 groups
- Short presentation on the budget and some of the cuts proposed.
- Discussion on impact on S75 groups in rural communities, mitigation and any other comments

DfC budget 2023/24

- DfC funding gaps:
 - Non-Ring Fenced Resource funding £111.2M
 - Capital funding £59M
- New bids totalling over £375M to progress DfC Ministerial priorities e.g. new Welfare Mitigations are not allocated
- Clarity being sought by officials on some decisions that may be outside scope of the NI (Interim Arrangements) Bill introduced 27.04.23
- EQIA consultation comments 07.06.23 to inform allocation of funds
- Comments open until 02.08.23 to inform further mitigation measures

DfC Cuts Already being Implemented

- Over 90% of DfC resource budget relates to area of protected statutory spend. Only 10% discretionary where cuts can be made.
- DfC already reducing departmental spend internally e.g. recruitment freeze, reduced overtime, no £ for Covid Recovery Schemes for Culture/Arts/Heritage/Sport/CVS
- No funding to Social Inclusion strategies and associated legislation
- Only essential spend on accommodation and digital transformation

DfC Resource Cuts Proposed

Functions & Bodies identified as being impacted by 2023/24 resource budget cuts include:

- **Social Security Delivery**

- Universal Credit
- Move to Universal Credit
- Health Assessments
- Ability to open all offices
5 days per week.
- Social Security Benefit Delivery
Laptop Replacement

- **Discretionary Support Grants**

- **Employment Support**

- Labour Market Partnerships (LMP)

- **Arm's Length Bodies;**

- **Third Party Organisations;**

- **Rates Support Grant (RSG); and**

- **Supporting People (SP) Programme**

DfC Capital Cuts Proposed

- Estimated reduction in new build social housing from 2,000-1,400 units.
- May have to consider closing Affordable Warmth scheme
- Reductions in Private Sector and Major Adaptations grants awarded
- Urban regeneration – public realm improvements in towns.
- Capital Projects in Culture, Arts & Heritage, Sports and Green Growth significantly curtailed or stopped.

S75 Impacts identified by DfC EQIA

- EQIA suggesting both men and women will be impacted by constraints on social security provision?
- Young people impacted by reduction and/or withdrawal of local employment support provision
- Disabled people impacted by inability to maintain parity of social security benefit provision & DSG demand
- People from Catholic community background more impacted by cut in new build social housing as research shows Catholic Household reference person applicants spend longest time on the waiting list.

Issues we have identified

- No rural needs impact assessment. DfC have said no overall RNIA being undertaken on budget.
- “any savings decision planned to be taken by the Department, in relation to managing its Budget 2023-24 allocation, will be subject to a Rural Needs Impact Assessment”

Feedback/Discussion

- Consultation Questions in EQIA are:
 1. Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 categories that have not been identified in the EQIA? If so, what are they and can you provide details?
 2. Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 groups that have not been identified If so, what are they?
 3. What action could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in allocation of the Department's budget?
 4. Any other comments?

Next Steps

- Responses should be submitted by 7 June to inform DfC allocation of 2023-24 funds.
- Responses received between 7 June and 2 August 2023 will inform further mitigation measures and reallocations of any additional funding in 2023/24.
- We will write up notes of our conversation this morning and circulate to everyone.
- We will share our draft response to the consultation.