

To: [adreview@ofmdfmi.gov.uk](mailto:adreview@ofmdfmi.gov.uk)

As an indoor media owner who has recently established a small business in Northern Ireland, I wish to contribute to the Review of Government Advertising. Given nature of my business, I am particularly interested in Campaign Advertising and have a few concerns, much of which are highlighted in your report.

1. Earlier this year I sent an FOI request looking for information in relation to media spend, upcoming campaigns and staff details of decision-makers. A standard response was received from most departments with the exception of a few, such as Jim Hamilton (DSD)& DARD who provided relevant information. It was clearly evident that government advertising was not centralised and information mechanisms could not retrieve relevant data (even from within departments). The recommendation of establishing a central information system is therefore important and fully supported. It must also permeate through all agencies, boards, trusts, NPDBs.
2. It is extremely difficult to get access to decision-makers within core departments, which is further compounded by splits between agencies, NPDBs, trusts and boards. It would be useful if a portal or some form of communication system was established to identify **future** timely opportunities of campaigns and relevant contact details of staff responsible for such. This would enable small businesses to target relevant personnel with their offering. This would provide greater transparency from the outset and also equal opportunity for all businesses to compete. As stated, government is the largest single advertiser in Northern Ireland and it is essential that they take account of the small business provider. Existing arrangements through CPD favour the larger business (ie the 'full service basis'), and as they do not keep a list of suppliers it is difficult to enter the market.
3. Some departments et al. hand over responsibility to the advertising agency who utilise the existing network of media channels therefore resulting in barriers to entry for the small media owner who is more than likely able to provide an efficient VFM service. This contradicts government initiatives to

provide opportunities for small business, accelerating entrepreneurship and TSN (as most agencies that secure government business are based in greater Belfast).

4. It is accepted that transparency of agency payments is required. This should also take account of when agencies settle accounts of government campaigns with media owners. As it is government protocol to issue payment within 30 days, are there any proposed monitoring requirements or codes of practice to ensure that agencies also have similar standards? Again this is an extremely relevant point as cash flow is particularly important to the small business.
  
5. Your recommendation of developing negotiated pricing with 'key media organisations' suggests that government campaigns will continue to be sourced through the large and established business rather than increasing opportunities for supporting new enterprise. It is recognised that they provide the network at present but there should be opportunities for all providers if they are able to meet the requirements of section 75.

I welcome the Review of Government Advertising and this opportunity to participate in the consultation exercise. The points raised above support your terms of reference for achieving efficiencies in government spend, and most importantly, transparency and opportunity for all providers whether large or small.

I would be grateful if you could keep in contact with developments in this exercise and look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Kind regards,

John Gillespie