



Labour Relations
A G E N C Y
Improving Employment Relations

21 DEC 2005

Chairman & Chief Executive's Office
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16 December 2005

Age Team
Equality & Rights Division
OFMDFMNI
Room E3.8
Castle Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST BT4 3SR

Dear Sirs,

The Labour Relations Agency wishes to respond to the above consultation document as follows:

1. The Agency welcomes the introduction of the legislation as a further step in widening the scope of equality and of good employment standards and practice.
2. The Agency as the statutory body for improving industrial relations in Northern Ireland will be supporting the implementation of this legislation through its employment information, advisory and dispute resolution services.
3. The Agency will work in partnership with other providers of advice and assistance, such as the ECNI and DEL in the production of guidance material, in the provision of workshops/talks and in undertaking or assisting other persons to conduct relevant research.
4. The Agency takes the view that in allegations of age discrimination, as in all other tribunal jurisdictions, departments and other public authorities should provide alternative dispute resolution machinery as a matter of good public employment policy and as part of their statutory duty to promote good relations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
5. The Agency is of the view that particular support will be needed for non-unionised companies and small firms. In this regard the Agency will be approaching the CBI and FSB to establish the nature and extent of the support required.

The Agency notes with some concern the absence in OFMDFM Age Discrimination documentation of reference to the LRA as an information and advice provider. The Agency requests OFMDFM to rectify this omission in all future documentation, launching and promotional events in relation to age discrimination. The Agency also requests OFMDFM to

pay particular attention to including the LRA in all its future documentation that relates directly or indirectly to employment relations.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Patterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

BILL PATTERSON
Chief Executive