



**Consumer Focus
Post**

Campaigning for a fair deal

27 April 2012

Jonathan Rose
Director
Ofcom Northern Ireland
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Dear Jonathan

Consumer Focus Post response to Draft Revised Equality Scheme for Northern Ireland

Consumer Focus Post welcomes the opportunity to respond to Ofcom's consultation on its Draft Revised Northern Ireland Equality Scheme.

As you will be aware Consumer Focus Post is the postal consumer champion in Northern Ireland which works to ensure a fair deal for all mail and post office consumers throughout Northern Ireland. In this context our response is aligned with our role to protect the interests of mail consumers.

We welcome Ofcom's public commitment and clear action plan, along with a timetable, on how it intends to promote equality of opportunity between people of different religious belief, political opinion, racial groups, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, disability and dependant status. We believe this is especially important when carrying out its functions, including securing the universal postal service in a way which adequately understands and reflects the needs of Northern Ireland postal consumers within the framework of the Equality Scheme. In addition, it is also vital to promote good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Consumer Focus Post also welcomes the arrangements that Ofcom has put in place throughout its scheme. These include those to assess compliance to section 75; for consultation with stakeholders, affected individuals and relevant representative groups; to monitor the impact of its policies; for ensuring public access to its information and services; and importantly Ofcom's complaint procedure for those that feel they may be affected by an alleged failure to comply with the scheme.

One aspect of the findings from Consumer Focus Post's most recent 2012 annual survey that may be of interest to Ofcom relates to those consumers with a disability. Over the last year, 82 per cent say their use of mail to communicate has remained the same compared to the overall figure of 76 per cent. Furthermore, annex 1 demonstrates and also confirms that mail is an important means of communication for this group as both senders and receivers of various types of mail.

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Regarding objective 2.4 of the Single Equality Scheme Business as Usual Action Plan, the findings from the 2012 survey also show the nature and extent of older consumers' use of mail to communicate with others. This also may be of particular interest when Ofcom reviews this objective against the desired outcome. Similar to the disability category, those consumers aged 55 and over were more stable users of mail communication, with 82 per cent saying their use of mail as a method of communication has remained the same. In addition, and similar to those with a disability, annex 1 also verifies that mail is an important means of communication for consumers aged 55 and over as both senders and receivers of mail.

Considering this, it is important that Ofcom understands the particular needs and concerns of Northern Ireland postal consumers - including those groups as prescribed in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 - and that, where relevant, these are appropriately reflected in the action plans for the Northern Ireland Equality Scheme.

We hope this response is useful and if you would like to discuss any of the details please contact me on 028 90675 042.

Yours sincerely

Kellin McCloskey
Head of Postal Policy (NI)

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Annex 1

Northern Ireland consumers' use of mail as a communication method

| | Overall | Disability | No Disability | 55+ |
|--|----------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Changes in mail communication over previous 12 months. % using post that has stayed the same | 76% | 82% | 75% | 82% |
| % of items sent at least once a month | 52% | 55% | 52% | 61% |
| Consumers sending mail. % of mail type sent mostly by post | Overall | Disability | No Disability | 55+ |
| personal correspondence | 65% | 83% | 61% | 84% |
| paying bills | 22% | 39% | 19% | 39% |
| general correspondence | 33% | 47% | 30% | 53% |
| Consumers as receivers of mail. % of mail type received mostly by post | Overall | Disability | No Disability | 55+ |
| personal correspondence | 71% | 88% | 67% | 87% |
| bills and statements | 62% | 81% | 58% | 83% |
| general correspondence | 76% | 91% | 73% | 89% |
| direct mail | 71% | 79% | 69% | 77% |
| newspapers, magazines and catalogues | 51% | 54% | 50% | 54% |

Data taken from the 2012 Annual survey for Northern Ireland Mail Service and Post Offices. Research carried out by Perceptive Insight Market Research.