



## **Comments from Imtac on the Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-21**

**(July 2016)**

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## **Making our information accessible**

As an organisation of and for disabled people and older people Imtac recognises that the way information is provided can be a barrier to accessing services and participation in public life. We are committed to providing information about our work in formats that best suit the needs of individuals.

All our documents are available in hard copy in 14pt type size as standard. We also provide word and pdf versions of our documents on our website – [www.imtac.org.uk](http://www.imtac.org.uk). In addition we will provide information in a range of other formats. These formats include:

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## **About us**

Intac is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including key transport professionals. Our role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

Our aim is to ensure that older people and disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Intac receives support from the Department for Infrastructure.

## **General comments**

Intac welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Programme for Government Framework (2016-21). In responding to the consultation the Committee has considered whether the Programme for Government resulting from the draft Framework will have the potential to deliver in two key areas. Firstly will the Programme for Government contribute to the development of a more inclusive society where disabled people and older people can participate on an equal basis with others. Secondly will the Programme for Government advance a more inclusive transport system where older people and disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

## **Comments on the Draft Framework**

Intac broadly welcomes and supports the proposed new approach that focuses on outcomes. However because of the generality of the draft Framework, the confusing layout of the document and some of the language used, the Committee remain sceptical that the final Programme for Government will deliver for older and disabled people. More specifically related to the outcomes based approach members have concerns that there could be a loss of focus on achieving deliverable programmes while seeking to meet policy objectives.

The Committee supports commitments to work across boundaries rather than traditional departmental lines and the principle of a collaborative approach involving people and organisations from

across society. More information is required as the Programme for Government is developed about how this will be achieved and the role disabled people and older people will have in this process.

Given the generality of the Framework it is hard to disagree that the 14 strategic outcomes and 42 supporting indicators broadly reflect a positive direction of travel, addressing key issues for our society. Dealing more specifically with key considerations for Imtac it is positive that Outcome 3 deals with creating a more equal society. It is also positive that Indicator 42 relates to disabled people. In relation to transport and travel it is positive that Outcome 13 recognises the importance of infrastructure in connecting people and more specifically acknowledges the role infrastructure plays in promoting inclusion. The two Indicators (23 & 25) relating to transport is again positive, recognising respectively the importance of transport in connecting people and specifically the importance of public transport and active travel.

From the perspective of Imtac there is clear omission of two key issues relating to older people and to infrastructure. Firstly in common with many other countries and regions people in Northern Ireland are living longer. While the increasing numbers of older people is a positive for our society, it does raise specific challenges for any Government around designing and delivering services. Imtac questions how any framework for a Programme for Government cannot include specific mention of these challenges. Secondly in relation to infrastructure the Draft Framework makes clear the important role travel can have in promoting inclusion. However there is limited acknowledgement in Programme for Government around the benefits of reducing the need to travel. In particular there is no mention in the Draft Framework of the key role land use planning plays in reducing the need to travel.

As well as these omissions Imtac has concerns that the wording used in some areas of the Draft Framework suggests that the Executive is not adopting a rights based approach to equality issues in general and disabled people and older people in particular. As currently drafted the wording suggests disabled people in particular are people who need things doing for and to them rather than active contributors to society. Because of this the Committee has concerns that the Executive could adopt a similar approach to previous Executives to these issues. This approach has resulted in a Disability Strategy ineffective in addressing the

barriers experienced by disabled people and both older people and disabled people falling behind the rest of the UK with regard to legal protections. In relation to Outcome 3 and Indicator 42 Imtac is recommending the wording of the Programme for Government needs to reflect a significant commitment to develop a society where disabled people, older people and others can participate fully and on an equal basis with others.

In relation to transport and infrastructure the Committee believes the Programme for Government needs to do more to demonstrate the important link between travel and social inclusion. Travel and mobility are essential in accessing everyday services and activities. A lack of travel opportunities contributes greatly to inequality in our society. Imtac welcomes the wording relating to Outcome 13 and Indicator 25 reflecting the positive role infrastructure and transport can play in promoting social inclusion. However this is not reflected the wording of Indicator 23. The Executive must recognise that many people in society, including many older and disabled people, have limited or no access to transport services. From the Committee's perspective a focus on average journey times on key economic corridors as a measure for assessing transport connections for people is wholly inadequate as it ignores people who live in our towns, cities and countryside who have limited or no access to transport.

### **Recommendations for strengthening the Draft Framework**

Imtac has developed the following recommendations based on issues raised above:

#### *Outcome 3: We have a more equal society*

- Imtac proposes this outcome be broadened to read, " We have a more inclusive and equal society."
- Imtac proposes the inclusion of an additional bullet point under the Role of the Executive to read, "Help to create a society in which everyone can fully participate."
- Imtac proposes amending the first bullet point to read "Helping to address the issues people face in their lives as a consequence of intolerance and discrimination."

*Outcome 4: We enjoy long, healthy, active lives*

- Imtac proposes there should be acknowledgement the growing numbers of people living longer and the potential benefits and challenges this brings to society and Government respectively.
- Imtac proposes that under the Role of the Executive of Outcome 4 there should be a commitment to make Northern Ireland a good place to grow older.

*Outcome 13: We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure*

- Imtac proposes the explanatory information regarding this Outcome specifically mentions the challenges around connecting people in rural areas.
- Under the Role of the Executive Imtac proposes that the first two bullet points include “accessible” in their wording eg “Providing high quality, accessible transport infrastructure.”
- The Committee proposes an additional bullet point under the Role of the Executive highlighting how sustainable land use planning policies can reduce the need to travel.

*Indicator 23: Improve transport connections for people, goods and services*

- Imtac proposes that measuring this indicator is not based solely on economic considerations connected to key corridors. Equal consideration should be given to broader social issues around how easy people find it to access transport services.
- By way of example Imtac proposes proximity of people to a frequent bus service could also be used to measure this indicator.

*Indicator 25: Increase the use of public transport and active travel*

- Imtac proposes that as well as gathering quantitative data on public transport usage and active travel, qualitative data should also be gathered to increase awareness of what prevents people from using public transport and active travel.
- Imtac proposes disabled people and older people should be included in qualitative research.

*Indicator 42: Increase quality of life for people with disabilities*

- Imtac proposes that the Executive adopt a more positive, rights based approach to the wording of this indicator.
- Imtac proposes “Increase participation by disabled people across society”.
- As the Executive already has obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights for People with Disabilities (UNCRPD), Imtac proposes the articles of UNCRPD are used by the Executive as a framework for measuring progress in meeting the reworded indicator.

**Next steps**

There is much work to be done to reassure disabled and older people that detailed proposals around the Programme for Government will bring benefits. Imtac believes it is essential that as part of the collaborative approach proposed by the Executive direct engagement takes place with older people and disabled people. This engagement must continue during the implementation of the Programme for Government.

As an organisation of disabled people and older people Imtac looks forward to making further contributions as the Programme for Government is developed and implemented.