



Response to the Northern Ireland Executive Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland by the Association of Northern Ireland Colleges

Introduction

This document is a response by the Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC) to the current Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland.

As the review covers around 80% of expenditure on devolved public services, ANIC believes that the review is of considerable interest to the further education sector, as education and libraries account for 24% of the expenditure on major services covered by the review.

This response does not answer every question set out in the consultation document but addresses those which ANIC considers to be of most relevance to the FE sector.

Chapter 2 Public Administration

Having set out ten desirable characteristics of an effective public administration system, the document asks what priority or weighting should be given to each of these characteristics in developing any new system of public administration?

ANIC has attributed the following weightings to the characteristics:

Very Significant	Significant	Not Significant
Democratic accountability	Subsidiarity	
Community responsiveness & partnership working	Quality of service	
Cross-community concerns	Scope of the public sector	
Equality and Human Rights (including equity of access)		
Co-ordination and integration of services		

Efficiency & effectiveness		
Innovation and business organisation		

Chapter 3

Delivering and Improving Public Services

What should be the role of the private, community and voluntary sectors in public administration?

Colleges play a key role with the private and community sectors in developing the local and regional economy. ANIC feels that there is an increased role for these sectors to play and that public administration should proactively engage in dialogue and partnership with these sectors as well as with the education sector.

How can the opportunities and benefits presented by Information and Communication Technologies (e-government) be used to improve the way services are delivered?

Colleges are at the forefront of Information Communications Technology and Information Learning Technology and ANIC feels that there is an increasing potential for new technologies to be used in the delivery of services. Such delivery not only provides easier online access to services, but allows for greater co-ordination between service providers.

However it must be remembered that access and inclusion should be at the heart of service provision, therefore care must be taken not to exclude those who do not have access to ICT.

Chapter 4

Accountability and Participation

What role and function do you think the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive and central government departments should have in relation to service delivery and accountability?

ANIC feels that the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive and central government departments should be a key driver in service delivery and accountability, which allows for more regional planning for sectors such as the FE sector.

What role and function do you think local government should have in relation to service delivery and accountability?

Local authorities are in the position of being based at the heart of communities, which enables them to respond to what is happening on the ground. By engaging with other local organisations such as FE colleges, local government can quickly identify community need and tailor service delivery and spending.

Chapter 7

Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights Considerations

ANIC and its member colleges are highly advanced in the area of equal opportunities and particularly good relations and it would be useful to instigate and utilise wider partnerships between the colleges and public administration in general in order to develop these issues.