

Cc Dr Mc Ginley

To: Members of the Interdepartmental Charter Group  
From: Patricia K Mc Alister  
DCAL, Linguistic Diversity Branch

**June 21, 2001**

Further to Seamus Tierney's note to you of 7 June 2001 I attach Draft Interim Guidance on use of Irish in official business. We suggest that all NICS staff, particularly those directly in contact with the public, either face to face or by phone, will need something along these lines before the Charter comes into force on **2 July 2001**.

Departments will be responsible for ensuring their staff receive the agreed guidance and that they have arrangements in place (e.g. Irish speaking officials identified) to enable staff to implement it. Departments will need to tailor the guidance at various points to reflect their own circumstances.

We would welcome comments, including 'Nil' returns, to [seamus.tierney@dcalni.gov.uk](mailto:seamus.tierney@dcalni.gov.uk), by **Tuesday 26 June 2001**. A final version will be returned to you on **Wednesday 27 June 2001**.

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**DRAFT INTERIM GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF IRISH IN OFFICIAL  
BUSINESS**



### **Introduction**

1. This circular offers interim guidance on the use of Irish in official business. It comes into effect on **2 July 2001** and supersedes Cent Sec 1/95. It applies to staff in all Northern Ireland Departments.
2. Staff should respond courteously and as positively as possible to clients who want to use Irish.

### **Personal Names**

3. Staff must respect the wishes of anyone who wants to be known by the Irish version of their name and should use only that name in official business.

### **Telephone Calls**

4. If a caller begins the conversation in Irish the official may respond in Irish or English. If the official has no Irish they should explain this [**individual Departments to decide form of words**] and offer to transfer the call to an Irish-speaking colleague or telephone interpreter. (**Departments to attach own list of officials/interpreters**). If no one is immediately available to answer the query in full the caller should be offered the option of discussing the matter in English, sending details of the query in writing, or having an Irish speaker call back.

### **Face to face interviews and meetings**

5. If a person gives advance notice that they wish to speak Irish, an Irish-speaking official or interpreter should be made available. If no notice is given an Irish speaking official or telephone interpreter should be contacted to join the interview or meeting. If neither is available and able to deal with the interview, the person should be given the choice of continuing the interview in English or making an appointment for another meeting when officials will have an interpreter present.

### **Public Meetings, Enquiries and Hearings**

- 6.. If a person gives advance notice that they intend to speak in Irish an interpreter or Irish speaking official should be made available. Where no notice is given and the officials present do not have Irish the person should be offered the choice of making their point in English, giving written views in Irish or a private meeting



with an interpreter present. The same applies to those who wish to speak English at meetings which Departments hold in Irish.

### **Correspondence**

6. When someone writes to the Department in Irish the letter should be referred as soon as possible to a translator or official with Irish. If it seems that, taking translation into account, it will not be possible to provide a substantive reply on target, an acknowledgement should be issued in the normal way, explaining that the letter is being translated and that a substantive reply will follow. Staff are not obliged to acknowledge or reply in Irish to correspondence received in Irish but are at liberty to do so, subject to Ministerial preference. An English translation should be filed of the original letter and any substantive response in Irish.

### **Addresses**

8. A Council may place a version of a street name in another language alongside the English name. For up to date information on lawfully adopted non English street names contact Raymond Clements (rclements.osni@doeni.gov.uk). When a person has used a lawful Irish language street name staff should use the Irish form in replying to correspondence, processing applications etc. They should note both versions on the official record. Where third parties may be involved i.e. where a document may need to be scrutinised (e.g. driving licence) or publicised (e.g. planning application) the English form of the street address should be shown as well as the Irish version. There are no restrictions on using Irish versions of other parts of an address e.g. townland, town, county, country.

### **Enquiries and monitoring**

9. Enquiries about this guidance and details of all requests to do business (oral or written) in Irish should be addressed to [**Departments to nominate their own internal contact**].

21 June

2001