

THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND
ASSEMBLY BUSINESS UNIT ENQUIRY

Reference: ABU/E/59/02

Date Issued: 07/03/2002

Subject: NOTE TO MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES:
EX- PRISONERS – EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

Action: The attached Note to Ministerial Colleagues from OFMDFM refers.
Please provide advice and draft reply, as appropriate, for
Minister's signature by close of play on Monday 11th March.
A sample layout is enclosed and submissions should be made
using size 12, Arial font.

PLEASE ALSO E-MAIL RETURNS TO: bryan.cottney@delni.gov.uk

Action By: Mr Arbuthnot

Copied To: PS/Minister
Secretary
Dr Davison
Mrs O'Hare
Mr Donaghy
Mrs Marson*
BF

*without attachments

Reply To: Assembly Business Unit by close of play on Monday 11th March
2002.

If you require any further clarification do not hesitate to contact Bryan Cottney,
ext 57830, or Fiona Neupert, ext 57800

**THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

*David Trimble, First Minister and
Mark Durkan, Deputy First Minister*

*Parliament Buildings,
Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX*

From: First Minister
Deputy First Minister

Copy Distribution Below

5 March 2002

Ministerial Colleagues

EX-PRISONERS – EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

We wish to seek your comments on the attached paper, outlining the Composition and Terms of reference for establishing an inter-departmental group on Employment and Employability of Politically motivated ex-prisoners.

The principle of establishing such an inter-departmental group requires the endorsement of the Executive, and we therefore attach this paper to establish if you are content for it to be included as an agenda item for the Executive meeting on 28 March.

Please copy any responses by 12 March to Mary Bunting at
Mary.Bunting@ofmdfmini.gov.uk.

M. Bunting

RT HON DAVID TRIMBLE MP MLA

*Approved by the First Minister and signed
in his absence*

Mark Durkan

PR MARK DURKAN MLA

*approved by the minister and
signed in his absence.*

Tel: (028) 9052 1013 Fax: (028) 9052 1283
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E-Mail: Ps.Ministers@ofmdfmini.gov.uk

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MEMORANDUM EC

CC LIST:

PS/Mr Leslie
PS/Mr Haughey
PS/Mr Loughran
Mr Haire
Mr Quinn
Mr Carvill
Mr Gowdy
Mr A Shannon
Mr Hamilton
Mr Hunter
Mr Small
Dr McGinley
Mr McGinn
Mr Robinson
Mr Shannon
Dr Smith
Mrs Flanagan
Mr Grimason
Mr McNarry
Mr Neale
Mr Campbell
Mr Logue
Mr Barrington
Mr Larkin
Ms Devlin
Miss McKibbin
Mrs Birch

EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

2. The meeting took place on 29 March 2001. On 5 May 2001 the group met Adam Ingram. Subsequently, Mr Ingram wrote to us indicating that he is

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MEMORANDUM EC

EX-PRISONERS - EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

Issue

- (i) Both the devolved administration and the NIO have been pressed by a group chaired by Sir George Quigley for a co-ordinated approach to issues relating to employment and employability of politically motivated ex-prisoners;
- (ii) The Belfast Agreement includes a commitment by Governments to facilitate the re-integration of prisoners into the community including "assistance directed towards availing of employment opportunities".
- (iii) The Programme for Government at paragraph 2.7 includes a commitment to considering what more might be done to help ex-prisoners overcome barriers to re-integration.

Background

1. In November 2000, Sir George Quigley wrote to us seeking a meeting to discuss a range of perceived impediments to the employment of politically motivated ex-prisoners, and the establishment of a task force to address these matters. Sir George was writing on behalf of a group comprising business, trade union, politically motivated ex-prisoner interests both (Loyalist and Republican) and NIACRO. We agreed that as an initial first step, officials from OFMDFM and other relevant Departments should meet Sir George's group to explore the matter further.
2. The meeting took place on 29 March 2001. On 8 May 2001 the group met Adam Ingram. Subsequently, Mr Ingram wrote to us indicating that he is

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not adverse to a co-ordinated approach on this matter across the two administrations.

3. Issues raised by the group centre on perceived barriers to employment and employability of politically motivated ex-prisoners including access to compensation in the event of damage to property, access to HGV and PSV licences, access to employment in the public and private sectors arising from criminal convictions and security vetting and training needs. Policies relating to these matters are cross-cutting both within the devolved administration and the NIO, which has responsibility for legislation on rehabilitation of offenders.
4. The Belfast Agreement includes a commitment by Governments to "continue to recognise the importance of measures to facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into the community by providing support both prior to and after release, including assistance directed towards availing of employment opportunities, re-training and/or re-skilling, and further education".
5. On the suggestion of the Department for Employment and Learning the Programme for Government includes a specific reference to ex-prisoners (at paragraph 2.7).

Recommendation

6. In our view a co-ordinated approach to policy development on this matter would be beneficial to all concerned. Accordingly, the Executive is invited to:
 - (i) Agree in principle to the establishment of an inter-departmental group, (with DEL taking lead responsibility) (the Group) to co-ordinate work of departments aimed at overcoming obstacles to employment and employability of politically motivated ex-prisoners; and

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- (ii) Agree the attached terms of reference and proposed composition of the Group. (See Annex A).

David Trimble

First Minister

Mark Durkan

Deputy First Minister

- I. The group will be chaired by a senior official from DEL.
- II. Membership of the Group will include - DEL, DE, DETI, DOE, DSD, DHSSPS, DPP, OFMDPM and NIO.
- III. The Group will engage with a co-ordinating group comprised of representatives from ex-prisoner groups, the CBI, NIC/CTU and NIACRO and
- IV. The Group's terms of reference will be as follows:

Having regard to Government's commitments in the Belfast Agreement to continue to recognise the importance of measures to facilitate the re-integration of prisoners into the community

- To explore the obstacles to employment faced by politically motivated ex-prisoners and how these obstacles might be overcome; and
- To make recommendations for consideration by Ministers by [date six months from date of Executive decision] on how current measures to assist employment and employability might be improved and what new initiatives might be taken by Government departments within the devolved administration, the NIO, employers and trade unions.

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**INTER-DEPARTMENTAL GROUP ON EMPLOYMENT AND
EMPLOYABILITY OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED EX-PRISONERS**

Composition and Terms of Reference

- I. The group will be chaired by a senior official from DEL
- II. Membership of the Group will include – DEL, DE, DETI, DOE, DSD, DHSSPS, DFP, OFMDFM and NIO.
- III. The Group will engage with a co-ordinating group comprised of representatives from ex-prisoner groups, the CBI, NIC/ICTU and NIACRO and
- IV. The Group's **terms of reference** will be as follows:

Having regard to Governments' commitments in the Belfast Agreement to continue to recognise the importance of measures to facilitate the re-integration of prisoners into the community

- To explore the obstacles to employment faced by politically motivated ex-prisoners and how these obstacles might be overcome; and
- To make recommendations for consideration by Ministers by [date six months from date of Executive decision] on how current approaches to employment and employability might be improved and what new initiatives might be taken by Government departments within the devolved administration, the NIO, employers and trade unions.