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**DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL  
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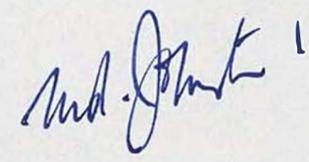
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*7th Floor, Churchill House, Belfast, BT1 4SD*

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**Unclassified**

**From:** Mark O'Donnell  
Private Office

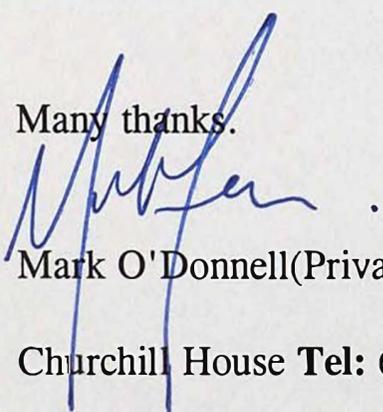


**To:** Mr J Hunter  
**CC List :**  
Mr J Johnston  
**Date:** 24/07/2001

**SUB/249/2001 : IRISH LANGUAGE**

The Minister has seen and read your submission of 01/05/2001 and is content.

Many thanks.



Mark O'Donnell(Private Office)

Churchill House **Tel:** 69216

From: J G Hunter

Date: 1 May 2001

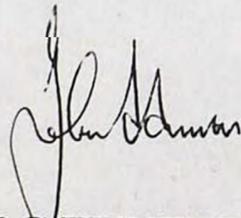
cc: Mr Radcliffe  
Dr Harbison  
Mr Thompson  
Mr Keenan  
Mr Davis  
Mr Johnston  
Mr Keenan

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PS/Minister

## IRISH LANGUAGE

1. Mr Gerry Adams MP recently wrote to the First and Deputy First Ministers on the provision of services for Irish language communities. He proposed that OFMDFM should consult with relevant Irish language bodies to develop a uniform and comprehensive set of protocols for the use and promotion of Irish across all Executive functions and that the Irish language newspaper "*La*" be added to the list of publications for press notices, public notices and job advertisements.
2. The draft reply for FM/DFM refers to the forthcoming guidance on the use of Irish in the official business of the devolved administration, which is to be submitted to the Executive for consideration and approval. The covering note from OFMDFM officials summarises the current position in regard to the use of the Irish language in official business. The Minister is asked to note the position in the programme for the issue of guidance.

  
J G HUNTER

**The Office of the First Minister  
and Deputy First Minister**

H55-3/4

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**Machinery of Government Division**

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**From: Tom Watson**

*Tom Watson*

**Date: 30 April 2001**

Copy distribution below

PS/First Minister  
PS/Deputy First Minister

**GM/316/2001 CORRESPONDENCE TO FM AND DFM FROM GERRY  
ADAMS RE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO IRISH LANGUAGE  
COMMUNITIES**

**Issue:** Dealing with correspondence from Gerry Adams MP on  
the provision of services for Irish Language communities.

**Timing:** Routine.

**Recommendation:** That the First Minister and Deputy First Minister reply  
along the lines of the attached draft.

**Background**

1. The First Minister and Deputy First Minister have received correspondence from Gerry Adams MP with regard to the provision of services to Irish Language Communities.
2. Mr Adams refers to the Belfast Agreement as having a number of provisions with regard to the Irish Language including taking resolute action to promote the language, facilitating and encouraging the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private where there is appropriate demand and making provision for liaising with the Irish Language community.
3. In order to enact these provisions, Mr Adams suggests there is an onus on Government Departments to communicate directly with the Irish

Language community. He continues that while some Departments are striving to meet such provisions, others have adopted a less comprehensive approach. This has led to inconsistency across the Executive and, to the disadvantage of Irish speakers.

4. He concludes his correspondence with two requests: that OFMDFM begin the process of consulting with the relevant Irish Language bodies to develop a uniform and comprehensive set of protocols for the use and promotion of Irish across all Executive functions. Secondly, as a first step, he proposes that the Irish Language newspaper "La", which will be produced daily rather than weekly from next year, be added to the list of publications for press notices, public notices and job advertisements.

### **Current position**

5. We have sought advice from NI Departments. Each are represented on an Inter-departmental Group, led by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, which is developing guidance to Departments on the implications of the ratification of the Council of Europe Charter on Regional and Minority Languages. The guidance is aimed at helping Departments promote Irish and to ensure a coherent approach. In the interim, individual Departments have been active in ensuring that their services take account of Irish Language users.
6. For example, DHFETE has produced an Irish version of its Customer Charter and has an Irish speaking Careers Officer to work with pupils in the Meanscoil Feirste (and Forbairt Feirste). The Department has also been working positively with GAIRM with regard to the delivery of vocational qualifications through the medium of the Irish Language and has provided £35K to support GAIRM research into the demand for such training. DHFETE also funds initial teacher training (£90K) through the medium of Irish at St Mary's University College, on the advice of DE.
7. In 1999, DCAL commissioned a comprehensive study of demand for government services in Irish and has more recently commissioned research into demand for early years care and education provision in the medium of Irish. A report is expected shortly.
8. Press releases, answers to Assembly Questions, public notices and advertisements issued by DHSS&PS appear in Irish as well as English. Under the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, DE may "pay grants to any body appearing to the Department to have as an objective the encouragement or promotion of Irish-medium education". Following consultation with all interested parties, the Promotional Body "Comhairle na Gaelscolaiochta" was established last August. In addition

a recent review carried out by DE reduced the viability criteria for Irish-medium (and integrated) primary schools.

### **Recommendation**

9. Responsibility for developing guidance on the official use of the Irish Language falls to DCAL and the Inter-Departmental Charter Group. The guidance, when finalised, will initially be submitted to the DCAL Minister. However since it is a cross cutting issue, the guidance will come before the Executive for consideration and final approval.
10. Since there is no central government policy on advertising, an integral aspect of the guidance developed by the Inter-departmental Group will be to focus on the issue of publication lists including press notices, public notices and job advertisements in Irish Language newspapers such as "La". Following the Executive's ratification of such guidance, Departments will be committed to operating within the established framework. This will go some way to address the factors such as consistency of approach highlighted by Mr Adams and the disadvantage the present position may represent to users of the Irish Language.
11. Given the above, it is recommended that the First Minister and Deputy First Minister reply to Mr Adams, pointing out that work within the administration is proceeding, led by DCAL, to develop a framework of guidance on the use of Irish in official business. That guidance will be brought before the Executive for consideration and approval as soon as possible.
12. A draft along these lines is attached for consideration.

**Tom Watson**  
**Ext 28301**

### **Distribution**

PS/Ministers

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OFMDFM advisers

**DRAFT LETTER FROM FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST  
MINISTER TO GERRY ADAMS MP**

**Gerry Adams MP  
President  
Sinn Fein  
51-55 Falls Road  
Belfast  
BT12 4PD**

April 2001

Thank you for your letter dated 13 April concerning the provision of services to Irish Language Communities.

We acknowledge the provisions in the Belfast Agreement with regard to the Irish Language and accept the onus on Departments in the administration to communicate directly with the Irish Language community. In this context we believe it important for a framework of guidance to be available to Departments which, along with their respective statutory responsibilities, can ensure that a coherent approach to the promotion of services to the Irish Language community is achieved.

In this regard the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, has already established an Inter-Departmental Group charged with drawing up guidance in relation to Article 10 of the Council of Europe Charter on Regional and Minority Languages on the use of Irish in the official business of the devolved administration. Work is proceeding to finalise the guidance and as the issue is cross cutting, it is anticipated that it will be submitted to the Executive for consideration and approval.

There is presently no central government policy in relation to advertising, therefore the guidance will address the position of the use of the Irish

Language in the area of publication lists and so on. In so doing we believe this will also help to develop greater consistency of approach across the administration.

**David Trimble**  
**First Minister**

**Seamus Mallon**  
**Deputy First Minister**