

Written Ministerial Statement

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Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

LAUNCH OF CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO EXTEND AGE DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION (AGE GOODS, FACILITIES AND SERVICES)

Published at 11.00 am on Friday 3 July 2015

Mr Robinson and Mr McGuinness (The First Minister and the deputy First Minister): Members will recall in our Statement to the Assembly on 19 February we stated that we intended to bring forward a public consultation on the proposals to extend age discrimination legislation (Age Goods, Facilities and Services).

In line with our Programme for Government commitment, we are today launching a consultation on policy proposals to extend age discrimination legislation to the provision of goods, facilities and services. The consultation document and details on how to respond to the consultation are available on the OFMDFM website.

This consultation document sets out policy proposals to protect adults and young people aged 16 years and over from discrimination on the basis of age in relation to goods, facilities and services, charities, premises, education, public functions, and private clubs and associations. The scope of the proposals is therefore broader than goods, facilities and services alone.

While the proposals are intended to prohibit harmful age discrimination, we recognise that some forms of differential age treatment can be a good thing. It is important to ensure that any new legislation only prohibits harmful or unjustifiable treatment that results in genuinely unfair discrimination because of age. It should not outlaw the many instances where it is justifiable or beneficial to treat people differently.

The consultation document sets out those areas where it is felt that different treatment of people of different ages is justified and where 'exceptions' to any future ban on age discrimination would be necessary to allow certain age-differentiated practices to continue.

The consultation will help us to establish a clear and robust policy position before legislation is brought forward in this area. It seeks views on the range of activities that should be covered by any future legislation on age discrimination, and on any exceptions that should be provided to ensure that the protection is effective and properly targeted.

This consultation will run for 14 weeks until 8 October 2015 and the process will be supported by a series of regional consultation events which will take place in Belfast and in each county. Details of the consultation events will be advertised on the OFMDFM website and in local papers. We would encourage everyone who wants to see a fairer and more equal society to engage with the consultation process by responding to the consultation questions or by attending a consultation event.