



## East Belfast Community Development Agency

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9th June 2008

Dear Rhona Parry,

**Re: Community Health Information Initiative response to the consultation:  
Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review – Phase One:  
The Digital Opportunity consultation**

The Community Health Information Initiative is the brainchild of community organisations working in cooperation with East Belfast Partnership. The focus of the work is on health inequalities and social well-being in the broader sense and working holistically to prevent further decline in health.

In response to your consultation and in relation to your main objective of furthering the interests of citizen-consumers; in particular, developing "*a new broadcasting licensing regime to foster self-regulation and broaden citizen/consumer choice*" we would recommend that Ofcom considers acceptance of local community television as public service broadcasters.

Our work is based on a belief that social and economic factors like income, unemployment, environment, education, housing, transport and lifestyle all affect health. We have developed an information base and share information on perceived health information needs and approaches to provision. We have worked closely with Northern Visions/NvTv, the Belfast local television station, on television programming, which highlights our activities and addresses the wider issues of health inequality, poverty and social exclusion in our community. Empowering citizens to become content providers and creating media which reflects and raises awareness of local issues and interests constitutes a valuable public service. It enhances skills, encourages a sense of place and ownership of the city and has the potential to foster greater citizenship.

Central funding provisions have been made in the Communications Act for community radio and local digital television. Ofcom should consider a fund, which could potentially be drawn from the license fee and from top-slicing commercial broadcasting licenses or other central government sources. Regarding aspects of work required to bring about a UK map of local and community television following analogue TV switch-off post 2010, we would request your assurance that no planning, at this stage, precludes a network of local digital multiplexes.

In relation to the development of local television in Belfast, we should be grateful if Ofcom would support Northern Visions/NvTv being carried on Freeview as a local public service broadcaster. Such a development would ensure that everyone in the city has access to a valuable local service and would support the efforts of those of us seeking to eliminate health inequalities and poverty in our community as well as nurturing the city's cultural and creative assets and talent.

Yours sincerely



Health Development and Connections Team

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