



northernireland  
tourist board

# Guidelines for Informal Information Partnerships

[nitb.com](http://nitb.com)

These guidelines are intended as a checklist to help VICs draw up informal local Visitor Information Point (VIP) partnerships with third party providers. They provide some “heads of terms” but the detail of what goes into the partnership agreement is for local negotiation, and will differ according to local circumstances and resources.

Not all criteria will be relevant in all cases. (For example, the sections on staffing will only be appropriate where there is a staff presence on site).

## 1. Strategy & Communications

- The service should be located at a site with proven demand for tourist information. It should be consistent with local and NI tourism strategy and policy. The business case will be evidenced by demonstrable benefits to the local visitor economy.
- The service should be committed to sustainable tourism through the support of local businesses, local produce, arts and crafts, sustainable transport, and other environmental initiatives.
- There should be a commitment to service planning and improvement.
- The nature and level of service to be provided should be discussed and agreed annually.
- There should be an effective procedure for monitoring customer feedback and handling complaints to highlight service improvements.
- There should be an agreed communication plan to ensure effective 2-way dialogue, so that VIP policies and services are consistent with local and NI strategies and guidelines.
- There should be an agreed process for monitoring performance and providing an annual report (see 8).

## 2. Resources

- Name a senior manager responsible for VIP service delivery.
- Allocate adequate resources to deliver the service.
- Agree appropriate equipment, IT, and other VIC support necessary to deliver the VIP. Whenever possible, the service should be IT enabled, i.e. Provide broadband internet access, with the facility to email and access local/NI data and systems.

## 3. Access & Signposting

- Wherever possible, provide ground level access to the service.
- Make reasonable adjustments to improve accessibility (e.g. ramps, low-level counter, induction loop).
- Comply with all current planning and legal requirements.
- Use approved signs to ensure that the service is well signposted for pedestrians and motorists, as appropriate.
- Consider new technology applications to improve access when the centre is closed (e.g. kiosk, internet and self-service systems).

## 4. Branding & Presentation

- Ensure that the nearest local VIC is clearly promoted, with a map and contact details.
- Provide adequate space for the VIP service in a clean and tidy environment.

## 5. Marketing

- Participate in publicity opportunities agreed with the VIC.
- Whenever possible, agree arrangements for collecting visitor contact data to support local and NI marketing.
- Ensure that the VIP service’s contact details are accurately listed in printed and online directories and tourism publications.
- Encourage reciprocal weblinks and social media to promote local VIC and NITB marketing initiatives.
- Participate in VIC and NITB marketing initiatives to promote the national network of VIC services.

## 6. Services

- Agree services appropriate to the location. Services may include some or all of the following:
  - Information and enquiry handling services.
  - Booking services, e.g. attractions, events.
  - Retailing tourism publications and merchandise.
- Provide a comprehensive, impartial, accurate information service.
- Promote accommodation establishments.
- Utilise available VIC resources, services and systems, as appropriate, to provide access to up to date quality local and NI information.
- Stock and display an appropriate range of free publications promoting tourism services in accordance with the VIC’s display policy.
- Promote the local and NI network of VICs.

## 7. Performance & Marketing

- Agree how service performance will be measured (e.g. no. of brochures distributed).
- Agree and review service targets annually with the VIC.
- Record appropriate agreed statistics.
- VIC to agree periodic site visits to check standards.

## 8. Staff and Training

**NB. This last section only applies to staffed VIPs run by Councils:**

- Agree with the VIC appropriate uniforms and badges to ensure visitors are aware of the VIP service.
- Discuss with the VIC available training and fam trip opportunities to ensure staff are supported in their VIP role.
- Discuss with the VIC what IT support is available so that staff can use relevant.