A Shared Future

Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland

March 2005

A Shared Future

If this document is not in a format that meets your requirements please contact the Community Relations Unit on 028 9052 2658.

Foreword

The Government's vision for the future of Northern Ireland is for a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust and the protection and vindication of human rights for all. It will be founded on partnership, equality and mutual respect as a basis of good relationships.

The essence of reconciliation is about moving away from relationships that are built on mistrust and defence to relationships rooted in mutual recognition and trust. Where relationships have been shaped by threat and fear over a long period we must make changes. We must make those changes through policy and law to address that threat and fear. In my view the absence of trust will set back both economic and social development; we will fail to realise the talents of our more diverse society.

This policy document sets out that we need to establish over time a shared society defined by a culture of tolerance: a normal, civic society, in which all individuals are considered as equals, where violence is an illegitimate means to resolve differences, but where differences are resolved through dialogue in the public sphere and where all people are treated impartially.

I am pleased to present the Government's Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland. Through *A Shared Future* many of you took the opportunity to tell us that retaining the 'status quo' was not an option. This has been a long process, but slow progress should not be mistaken for standing still. Many steps have been taken along the way and the publication of this document is most definitely not the end point. The fundamental principles and aims of this document will begin to underpin how we all, Government, political representatives, local authorities, civic society, can work together to bring about a shared future for all of us in Northern Ireland.
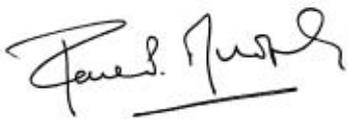
The Right Honourable Paul Murphy MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

Introduction

Good community relations policy, and its outworking, is the search for the practical foundations of trust between all people in Northern Ireland who have been divided on the basis of perceived political, cultural, religious, class or ethnic background.

The division that perpetuates in Northern Ireland is costly both socially and economically. Adapting public policy in Northern Ireland simply to cope with community division holds out no prospect of stability or sustainability in the long run.

Over recent years the economic performance of Northern Ireland has shown significant improvement. With increasing economic progress we have seen the workforce in Northern Ireland change: it has become more diverse, drawing in much needed skilled workers to support important public services and local companies. Some companies depend on these workers to continue their business in Northern Ireland.

However, a small minority in Northern Ireland society have subjected migrant workers to racially motivated intimidation and violence. Such behaviour is unacceptable. Vulnerable groups and individuals will be protected from those who cannot accept their responsibility for the maintenance of good community relations and persist in abusive and violent behaviour.

Good relations must be based on partnership, equality and mutual respect. It cannot be built on unequal foundations. It must be built upon the significant progress that has been achieved to deliver equality of opportunity right across Northern Ireland.

Public authorities already have a statutory duty under Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. The new policy and strategic framework will provide a mechanism through which departments can more effectively mainstream good relations considerations into policy development. It will be complemented by the Northern Ireland Racial Equality Strategy. And of course the Equality Commission will have an important role to play in continuing to advise public authorities and others on this important duty.

This Good Relations Policy and Strategic Framework, with its vision of a shared and inclusive society, is not an aspiration or a pipe dream. A future shared between and within the communities of Northern Ireland (both old and new) is a reality. It was clear from the *Shared Future* consultation that there is overwhelming support for a shared and inclusive society.

This document outlines how the illustrative practical steps and actions, based on common fundamental principles, can be co-ordinated across government and throughout civic society to ensure an effective and coherent response to sectarian and racial intimidation with the aim of building relationships rooted in mutual recognition and trust. These will be developed into detailed actions in the first triennial action plan that I will publish in Autumn 2005.

Finally, while the Government will lead and co-ordinate actions flowing from this policy and strategic framework, it will be incumbent on every individual and organisation in Northern Ireland to play their part to promote a shared Northern Ireland. Civic society has already shown us that it is prepared to stand up and be counted as we have recently seen with the **'One Small Step'** campaign to **'Live Life without Barriers'**. It is now time for the rest of us to do the same.
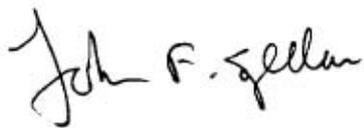
The Right Honourable John Spellar MP
Minister of State for Northern Ireland

Part 1

The policy and strategic framework for good relations in Northern Ireland

Summary

- **moving from vision to action through**

  - recognising scale of the challenge
  - responsibility of all society
  - strong public service agenda underpinned by the good relations duty
  - effective legal response
  - context
  - policy aim
  - fundamental principles

1. The Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland

> *"The establishment over time of a normal, civic society, in which all individuals are considered as equals, where differences are resolved through dialogue in the public sphere, and where all people are treated impartially. A society where there is equity, respect for diversity and a recognition of our interdependence".*

1.1 Scale of the Challenge

1.1.1 In every society today, how we live together is a major challenge for governments and individuals. Population movement is stimulating growing ethnic diversity - by nationality, culture, religion and language. Global trends mean tensions can be widespread between those claiming to represent different 'communities'. In a society like Northern Ireland, where these tensions have become deeply entrenched into communal division, the challenge is all the greater. But we can draw a positive lesson from elsewhere: in most places, most of the time, most people rub along in their everyday lives. A more 'normal' life is possible. And the challenge facing this society, while difficult, is neither isolated nor intractable.

1.1.2 Multi-ethnic societies that work well teach us more specific lessons too. They recognise that the complex make-up of each individual is what gives us our unique 'identity' - rather than the latter being a blunt label attached to whole groups. And this identity is something that also evolves over time, as we go through life experiences and relate to others - not something unchanging which seals us off from those who are 'different'.

1.1.3 Such societies, though never devoid of tension, can stay integrated. They can have viable democratic structures, which put a premium on dialogue. Multi-ethnic societies that don't work follow a different logic. There, individuals are reduced to simple group stereotypes, which easily turn into enemy images. Those who exploit difference can then widen communal divisions. In such societies, segregation and periodic violence are the norm and democratic institutions are inherently unstable, corroded by mistrust of 'the other side'.

1.1.4 Northern Ireland is a society where violence, thankfully, is not on anything like the scale it once was. But sectarian and racist manifestations are still all too evident, and the democratic institutions established by the Belfast

Agreement are still suspended. Government has a responsibility, as do all of us who live here, to address this challenge.

1.1.5   We could persuade ourselves, for example, that all Northern Ireland's problems are the fault of paramilitaries. A longer historical sweep would suggest otherwise: the area that now comprises Northern Ireland has been deeply divided along sectarian lines over centuries - regardless of whether paramilitaries have been active.

1.1.6   We could argue, alternatively, that the division in Northern Ireland is not a gulf of misunderstanding between Catholics and Protestants, but one of inequality. Yet this would not fit the recent historical record: since the civil rights movement of the 1960s the opportunity gap has, rightly, been narrowed - yet communal polarisation remains undiminished, never mind the harassment of newer minority ethnic people.

1.1.7   The **underlying difficulty is a culture of intolerance**, which we will need to remedy if we are to make Northern Ireland a more 'normal' society - the sort of society we would all be proud to live in.

1.1.8   Culture is multifaceted: it's about education, planning, and the arts, among others. It requires the engagement of all so that wider expertise - particularly, in reconciliation - can be brought to bear.

1.1.9   These resources can be pooled to rise to the challenge with 'joined-up government' and genuine partnership as the watchwords. Where we should be trying to go is clear - we are not talking about an apartheid society. A 'cultural variety' in constant motion is very different from, and highly preferable to, a limited 'variety of cultures' set in aspic. Nor, however, are we talking about a process of homogenisation, or of assimilation to one official ethos, but a ring of diverse cultural expressions where interactions, can thrive.

1.1.10   To quote from the Council of Europe (1978)

         "A society's cultural life is rich if people in the society can communicate with each other, describe their reality and their experiences, voice their feelings, understand one another and thus – in the end – be in a position to respect one another."

Investment in our cultural capital is therefore fundamental to the achievement of A Shared Future.

1.1.11   A shared society, which is our goal, is at ease with wide individual diversity, from which dynamism and vitality stem. It is held together by a willingness to engage in dialogue, on a basis of equality, and by a commitment to the common good - by a culture of tolerance. The Belfast Agreement committed its adherents to the following vision:

"the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust, and to the protection and vindication of the human rights of all."

1.1.12   The section of the Belfast Agreement on reconciliation and victims of violence said more specifically:

"An essential aspect of the reconciliation process is the promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level of society, including initiatives to facilitate and encourage integrated education and mixed housing."

1.1.13   Three clear principles flow from this, and from the wider international debate on inter-culturalism. If we follow these principles we cannot go far wrong.

First, everyone in Northern Ireland deserves to be treated as an individual, equal with every other ('vindication of the human rights of all') - not a mere cypher for a 'community'.

Second, each of us must mutually recognise our common humanity ('achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust') - rather than engaging in a perpetual and sterile battle for ethnic power.

And third, the state must be neutral between competing cultural claims ('promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level' and encouragement of 'integrated education - in its widest sense - and mixed housing').

1.1.14   This document sets out to turn that vision into difficult, but achievable, aims and objectives. These are then translated, in Part 2, into illustrative actions that can be taken by departments and other social actors. These will be worked up into detailed actions in the first triennial plan which will be published this Autumn. Part 3 explores the mechanisms by which these actions will be effected, and Part 4 looks at how they will be monitored and evaluated. Part 5 checks the equality impact of the policy and strategic framework.

1.2   Aims and Objectives

1.2.1   The overall aim of this policy is to establish, over time, a shared society defined by a culture of tolerance: a normal, civic society, in which all individuals are considered as equals, where differences are resolved through dialogue in the public sphere and where all individuals are treated impartially. A society where there is equity, respect for diversity and recognition of our interdependence.

1.2.2   The following policy objectives flow to realise this aim:

- eliminate sectarianism, racism[1] and all forms of prejudice to enable people to live and work without fear or intimidation;

- reduce tension and conflict at interface areas;

- facilitate the development of a shared community where people wish to learn, live, work and play together;

- promote civic-mindedness via citizenship education through school and lifelong learning;

- protect members of minorities (whether for example by religion, race, or any other grounds) and mixed marriages from intimidation and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice;

- ensure that all public services are delivered impartially and guided by economy, efficiency and effectiveness;

- shape policies, practices and institutions to enable trust and good relations to grow;

- encourage understanding of the complexity of our history, through museums and a common school curriculum;

- support cultural projects which highlight the complexity and overlapping nature of identities and their wider global connections;

- support and learn from organisations working across ethnic divides for reconciliation, including those operating on a north-south basis;

---

[1]   The term racism is used throughout the document as shorthand for all forms of racial intolerance and discrimination including Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

- ensure voice is given to the diverse victims of violence in Northern Ireland, including via archives and victim-centred reconciliation events;

- encourage communication, tolerance and trust across Northern Ireland, but particularly in areas where communities are living apart;

- promote dialogue between and mutual understanding of, different faiths and cultural backgrounds, both long standing within Northern Ireland and recent arrivals to these shores, guided by overarching human rights norms.

1.3   Background and Context

1.3.1   This document sets out in detail the overarching policy aim, strategic framework and mechanisms to achieve the Government's vision. It draws considerably from the very widespread debate generated by *A Shared Future a Consultation Paper on Improving Relations in Northern Ireland* which was launched by the Government on 28 January 2003.

1.3.2   This broadly-based and highly inclusive process, which ended on 30 September 2003, engaged more than 10,000 people and generated over 500 written responses from across society. The consultation document was also considered by the Northern Ireland Grand Committee, at Westminster on 17 June 2004 and by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee during its inquiry into hate crime in Northern Ireland during 2004.

1.3.3   The Department wishes to thank Professor John Darby, University of Notre Dame, Indiana and Professor Colin Knox, University of Ulster who analysed all the responses and assisted in drawing out the main themes and policy options. It also acknowledges and thanks Dr Jeremy Harbison for his earlier preparatory work. Copies of *A Shared Future*, the archived responses and the Knox/Darby analysis of the responses can be found at the website www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk.

1.3.4   It is clear from the consultation that there is **overwhelming support for a shared society**. Specifically, three public policy areas attracted most attention during the consultation: security and law and order, education, and housing. Government was urged to take a cross-departmental approach that explicitly encouraged **"sharing over separation"** in delivering policies and services for good relations.

1.3.5   The Government acknowledges that Northern Ireland remains deeply divided, despite measurable progress. Patterns of division and a culture of violence have become ingrained through fear, mistrust and in many cases, a weary acceptance of patterns of living that have developed over many years in response to conflict and the role of paramilitaries.

1.3.6   Continued sectarianism, racism, inter and intra community conflict act as a cancer that eats at the body of Northern Ireland. They are a significant barrier to social and economic progress, particularly in those communities that have suffered as a result of the debilitating cycle of social exclusion and poverty that, in part, has been fed by violence and conflict. They lower morale and prevent communities taking advantage of opportunities to build a better future.

1.3.7   Division in Northern Ireland is costly in terms of both social and public resources. There is, unquestionably, **an economic imperative to tackle these costs**, particularly when government has to face up to hard decisions relating to balanced investments across public services. Adaptive policy-making and inefficient resource allocations to address segregation are not sustainable in the medium to long-term.

1.3.8   The causes of division are complex and the understanding of these causes and their associated costs will be an important dimension of the work that will flow from this policy and strategic framework.

1.3.9   It is important to recognise that whilst acknowledging the scale of the challenge in creating a shared society, Northern Ireland has benefited from a recent period of economic stability evidenced by rising levels of employment, falling unemployment and steady growth in gross value-added. However, despite these advances it remains true that there are high levels of economic inactivity and for some in our society disadvantage, poverty and poor employment prospects remain the order of the day. Government remains committed to tackling these problems.

1.3.10   Economic prosperity, which will bring with it a more diverse workforce, and equality of opportunity will remain key drivers for this society. It is against that context of a more stable and promising economic outlook, coupled with a strong equality and human rights agenda, that the good relations policy and strategic framework for making Northern Ireland a shared society are set.

1.3.11   Good relations must be based on partnership, equality and mutual respect. **They cannot be built on unequal foundations**. They will only be achieved on

a sustainable basis if they are built on the significant progress that has been made on the equality agenda. The good relations agenda is not – and should not be – in conflict with the equality agenda.

1.3.12   Important though it is for government to tackle unfairness and inequalities in people's life chances, a key challenge for government is to build strong **cohesive communities**. Northern Ireland as a society is still too far away from achieving that aim. We need to build upon our strong legislative and public policy frameworks to progress our goal of a more equal and inclusive society. **Law and order will be a key cornerstone; organised crime and criminality must be tackled, paramilitarism and the culture of violence to resolve disagreement all must end.**

1.3.13   It is important, however, to recognise the very positive work that continues to take place right across Northern Ireland aimed at improving relationships: this is particularly the case in workplaces. There are many good examples of relationship-building led by voluntary groups, churches and other faith-based groups, district councils, trades' unions and the private sector working collaboratively with public agencies and local communities. Government acknowledges this work and will continue to support those very practical foundations of relationship-building.

1.3.14   It is also important for all parts of civic society to take responsibility for building a shared, tolerant and inclusive society. **Relationships are central**. There is, therefore, an onus on all of us to play a part in initiating, encouraging and developing dialogues. We need to ensure that the 'spaces' where we have a responsibility are really safe for everyone and they are used actively to create those conversations to build relationships.

1.3.15   Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a duty on public authorities concerning the promotion of good relations. Government believes that this duty places a responsibility on public bodies as employers, policymakers and service providers to deliver good relations. They should **set the pace** on movement towards a shared society and **should lead by example**. The goal of a shared Northern Ireland should be central to and at one with, delivering good-quality public services and a better quality of life for everyone.

1.3.16   Government will take forward a **strong public service agenda** that takes the duty to promote and foster good relations seriously. It will also define what can and cannot, be tolerated in terms of behaviours and expressions of

hatred, threats and stereotyping. Society, particularly vulnerable groups and individuals, will be protected from those who cannot accept their responsibility for the maintenance of good community relations and persist in abusive and violent behaviour. The new hate crime legislation and existing legislation on public order, protection from harassment and terrorism will be enforced robustly.

1.3.17   **Ultimately sustained and deeper progress depends on political stability.** Whilst actions to promote good relations will be driven forward by government it is clear that improving relations in the long-run will require leadership at political, civic and community level.

1.4   **Fundamental Principles**

1.4.1   The policy aim and strategic framework will be underpinned by a number of fundamental principles.

Political, civic and community leadership
While Government will lead and co-ordinate a new policy on good relations, it is incumbent upon every individual and organisation in Northern Ireland to play their part to promote a shared Northern Ireland. Real change will require leadership, vision, institutional commitment and long-term policies to promote and sustain change.

The North/South and East/West perspectives
Improving relationships within Northern Ireland has to be viewed in the wider context of developing strong relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, and between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Progress towards a shared society must be built upon the significant progress that has been achieved in promoting equality of opportunity and human rights.

A shared future is important to everyone in Northern Ireland
Improved community relations should benefit everyone and threaten no one. Building trust involves everyone, including political and civic leadership and institutions of government. It should not be expected to emanate from violent interfaces alone. Conflict at interface areas is the tragic symptom of a systemic lack of trust rather than the sole cause or evidence of it.

Separate but equal is not an option. Parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable both morally and economically

Good relations must build on the significant progress that has been made on the equality agenda. No one is arguing for an artificially homogeneous Northern Ireland and no one will be asked to suppress or give up their chosen identity. However, the costs of a divided society - whilst recognising, of course, the very real fears of people around safety and security considerations - are abundantly clear: segregated housing and education, security costs, less than efficient public service provision, and deep-rooted intolerance that has too often been used to justify violent sectarianism and racism. Policy that simply adapts to, but does not alter these challenges, results in inefficient resource allocations. These are not sustainable in the medium to long-term.

Improving relations is an issue that affects all public services

Equality of opportunity and the promotion of good relations are central to delivering good-quality public services and a better quality of life for everyone. The good relations duty under S75 (2) will shape the public service response.

The legacy of conflict and violence must be dealt with

Conflict and violence between and within communities have left a profound legacy. This legacy is visible in terms of deaths, injuries and bereavements - civilian and security forces; in terms of those who have served time in prison as a result of being directly involved in the conflict; in terms of how lives, identities, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours have been shaped. All of these have crafted and continue to shape people's life chances.

Relationships matter and are central

Moving from relationships based on mistrust and defence to relationships rooted in mutual recognition and trust is the essence of reconciliation. Where relationships have been shaped by threat and fear over a long period, we must make changes through policy and law to address that threat and fear. The absence of trust will set back both economic and social development as firms look for more stable environments and we fail to realise the talents of our diverse community.

Northern Ireland is no longer a bipolar society – it is enriched because it is becoming more culturally diverse

As our society becomes more peaceful and prosperous – and as our demand for skilled labour exceeds what can be supplied locally – we are seeing greater ethnic diversity than ever before. There are substantial economic and social benefits to be derived from this increased diversity. Our businesses

and public services have the workers that they need and our communities, and in particular our children, are broadening their knowledge and experience of new cultures. However, a small minority in Northern Ireland society has subjected new migrant workers, students and others from racial minority backgrounds to racially motivated intimidation and violence. We must combat racism and sectarianism or any other extremism and proactively encourage understanding and tolerance.

Part 2

Towards a shared society

Summary

- achieving a shared society – shared education, housing, services and communities
- tackling the visible manifestations of sectarianism and racism
- reclaiming shared space
- reducing tension at interface areas
- supporting good relations through cultural diversity
- continuing to develop shared workplaces
- the important linkage between community development and community relations
- rewarding good behaviour and penalising bad behaviour

2. Towards a Shared Society

This section of the document sets out a number of priority areas and illustrative actions to achieve progress on building a shared society. It is recognised that in many instances collective action at local level is more likely to deliver sustainable progress. All the illustrative actions are underscored by the good relations duty under S75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. These and other actions will be incorporated in the first triennial action plan that will be published in the Autumn.

2.1 Tackling the Visible Manifestations of Sectarianism and Racism

> **Freeing the public realm (including public property) from displays of sectarian aggression through:**
>
> **active promotion of local dialogue involving elected representatives, community leaders, police and other stakeholders to reduce and eliminate displays of sectarian and racial aggression; and**
>
> **the police, in conjunction with other agencies, acting to remove such displays where no accommodation can be reached.**

2.1.1 All forms of intolerance and violence based on racism, sectarianism or any other extremism are abhorrent in a democracy. There are norms and behaviours within society that are acceptable and those that simply are unacceptable. The new hate crime legislation that became law in September 2004 will deal with crimes motivated or aggravated by "hatred based on" race, religion, disability or sexual orientation. Also, other statutory and community measures are addressing anti-social behaviour within communities. The Government expects enforcement by the police and action by the criminal justice system to deal firmly with behaviour that is not consistent with what is expected in a normal society.

2.1.2 Legislation, whilst important, is only one element of a comprehensive response. The removal of *"inappropriate and aggressive"* displays of flags (specifically paramilitary flags and any other displays which have the effect of intimidating or harassing), murals and painted kerbstones is best undertaken as a common project with agencies working collaboratively with the police, elected representatives and local communities as part of environmental improvements with a view to enhancing the areas economically and building trust.

2.1.3   Research entitled **Transforming Conflict: Flags and Emblems** has recently been carried out by the Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast (QUB), on behalf of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). The research, which will be published alongside this document, underscores the point that the use of options including effective policing in conjunction with projects highlighting community development and environmental improvement offers the possibility of developing public spaces that allow communities to celebrate and commemorate without intimidation.

2.1.4   Some key points arising from the research were:

- The flying of so-called 'popular' flags around particular periods of the year has long taken place in Northern Ireland and is common throughout the world. However, there has been a proliferation of this practice with flags often left flying for much of the year. It is also clear that whilst some of the practices are 'popular', in that members of the community welcome the appearance of flags, bunting and painted kerbstones, some displays are not.

- **Most significantly flags are routinely used to mark territories.** If one visits almost any of the interfaces in Belfast there are flags clearly erected so that the other community can see them. Indeed great effort is sometimes expended so that flags can be seen beyond the area in which they are erected.

- The inappropriate display of flags and emblems, particularly paramilitary displays, can lead to economic damage and can discourage investors, business and employment.

- Evidence from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey from 2003 suggests that **66% of people believed that paramilitary flags should be removed** and that nearly 1 in 4 people had felt threatened by paramilitary flags and murals and the painting of kerbstones.

- A significant issue in dealing with this problem is the range of agencies that have some responsibility. These include the Roads Service, local councils, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). None of these agencies has full responsibility although there are examples when all have tried to tackle the problem. The policies of local councils remain largely ad hoc and the practices by all agencies in dealing with cases often appear inconsistent. A number of local councils have, however, been developing successful approaches.

- Whilst many people would be in favour of clearer guidelines or rules of enforcement around the flying of flags or painting of kerbstones nearly **all those interviewed stressed the importance of changing the context within which displays of symbols take place**. It is vital to understand why people feel the need to make symbolic displays. It has been clear in many of the cases studied that flag flying was part of a tit-for-tat display around territory. As such, **improved relationships around interfaces can see the reduction of flags or changes in the murals.**

- It was clear, however, from the research carried out by QUB that many people voiced concerns that certain practices are unacceptable in legitimising illegal organisations and effectively threatening people in communities. In these instances it is argued that greater use of existing legislation should be considered.

Proposed Action

2.1.5   This will require a number of specific actions by Government and other agencies, including the PSNI, which will be worked up in detail as part of the triennial action plan. In the meantime, work will be progressed on:

- the development of an agreed protocol between PSNI and all key agencies outlining precise responsibilities for removing 'inappropriate and aggressive' displays taking account of existing legislation;

- the development of contact procedures for all agencies with responsibility for removing 'aggressive' and 'inappropriate' displays – district councils, Department of Regional Development Roads Service (DRD), NI Housing Executive, PSNI;

- increasing the number of individuals willing and able to mediate disputes involving symbols, whether flags, murals, memorials, racist graffiti, painted kerbstones or other forms of 'marking';

- sustained support for organisations engaged in transforming the environment in which people live;

- development of a more co-ordinated approach to the management of conflict and conflict transformation through the use of dedicated fieldworkers; and

- enforcement by the police (acting jointly with key agencies).

2.1.6 It is important that this work is underscored at local level. The Community Relations Council (CRC), in consultation with district councils, PSNI and other agencies, will be asked to help develop, as part of the triennial action plan, local protocols/charters. These should be supplemented by guidance similar to that developed by some district councils for dealing with bonfires. These protocols or charters will address:

- the removal of flags and emblems from arterial routes and town centres;

- the removal of all paramilitary flags and displays;

- the control of displays of flags and emblems in particular areas: eg: mixed and interface areas and near buildings such as schools, hospitals and churches; and

- that 'popular' flag flying should be limited to particular times and particular dates.

2.2 Reclaiming Shared Space

> **Developing and protecting town and city centres as safe and welcoming places for people of all walks of life.**
>
> **Creating safe and shared space for meeting, sharing, playing, working and living.**
>
> **Freeing the public realm from threat, aggression and intimidation while allowing for legitimate expression of cultural celebration.**

2.2.1 In moving forward action to free the public realm from displays of sectarian, racist or any other form of aggression, Government is firmly of the view that city and town centres in Northern Ireland should be safe and welcoming places for all. As more and more centres are striving to promote day and night economies we need to ensure that they are safe and attractive to those who seek to access services.

2.2.2 In some areas, though not all, there is a tendency to mark centres, arterial routes and other main thoroughfares with flags and symbols. This weakens the economic and commercial vitality of these centres and can often act as a barrier to investment and trade and as a chill factor to many people who would otherwise visit. We **must continue to reclaim the public realm for**

people who are living and working in, or as visitors to, Northern Ireland, to ensure that everyone feels safe travelling to and from these centres and can access services.

Proposed Action

2.2.3   The Government acknowledges the sensitivity around displays, flags and emblems. If we are serious about moving to a normal society then **the display of any flag on lamp-posts should be off limits.** The same should apply to the display of bunting, graffiti or paint on any publicly owned object. The Government wishes to see clear and positive action and encourages local dialogue to address this issue. In the absence of local agreement it will seek ways to free up town and city centres. This will include reviewing the effectiveness of existing legislation and taking early steps to clear arterial routes of inappropriate displays. In the meantime, it will be important to progress the proposed actions in section 2.1.

The Planning Agenda

2.2.4   The Department of the Environment's (DOE) statutory planning process is an important tool in translating the key themes of the Regional Development Strategy into local development plan policies. The community development model of engagement with the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and others provides a hugely important dimension that can hopefully help shape planning for the better. The development plan-led approach with its associated policies provide excellent tools to promote physical planning that is in tune with the Government's policy of promoting good relations.

2.2.5   Also, the implementation of the Regional Development Strategy and the Regional Transportation Strategy, particularly through sub-regional planning and the integration of the three areas' transport plans, provide the strategic planning contexts within which many of the actions proposed in this policy document will be advanced.

2.2.6   The first triennial action plan will develop these points further.

2.3 Reducing Tensions at Interface Areas

> **Reducing tensions at interface areas must go beyond the 'band-aid' approach. It requires a combined short, medium and long-term approach that is earthed in encouraging local dialogue and communication, the sharing of resources, which is set in a wider context of social and economic renewal.**

2.3.1 Conflict at interfaces is the tragic symptom of a systemic lack of trust rather than the sole cause or only evidence of it.

2.3.2 Supporting communities in these areas to transform conflict remains an important priority for Government. Neil Jarman's report '**Demography, Development and Disorder: Changing Patterns of Interface Areas' (July 2004)** and the report prepared by the Belfast Interface Project entitled '**A Policy Agenda for the Interface**' (July 2004) offer significant contributions to the emerging discussion on responding to issues in interface areas.

2.3.3 The former report reminds us that interface areas are not a static phenomenon, nor a purely historical legacy of 'the Troubles'. Rather they are a dynamic part of the social fabric of a community that is highly polarised and extensively segregated. The concept of an interface and the forms of interfaces are more complex than has previously been acknowledged. The report also stresses the need to acknowledge the social dynamic in processes of segregation and the continuing pressures to further segregation in many areas. It makes the point that **shared and neutral spaces come under particular types of pressure and need positive, sustained actions to ensure that they are not abandoned nor avoided, but rather that they remain shared and used by all sections of all communities.**

2.3.4 The Belfast Interface Project report argues strongly for the development of a coherent long-term strategy to address the needs of interface areas and communities both through government plans and priorities and through strategies developed by local bodies, such as Belfast City Council.

2.3.5 **The Government welcomes both reports.** They are helpful in stimulating new thinking and generating ideas for new actions to tackle the specific issues in interface areas and, perhaps more importantly, they underscore the need for effective responses to avoid the creation of new interfaces. It also agrees that a **more coherent longer-term approach is needed to tackle the problems of interface areas** (and those areas at risk of becoming flash points).

Proposed Action

2.3.6   This is best taken forward as part of a more integrated local planning framework, led by local councils in collaboration with key agencies and other stakeholders.

2.3.7   The triennial action plan will provide detail of such an integrated planning framework: it will look at a range of interventions to address strategically the issues at interface areas, including specific action in other areas, including those in rural communities, potentially at risk of becoming 'interfaces'.

2.4   Shared Education

Demonstrably promoting sharing in all levels of education.

Developing opportunities for shared and inter-cultural education at all levels – nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary.

All schools should ensure through their policies, structures and curriculae, that pupils are consciously prepared for life in a diverse and inter-cultural society and world.

Encouraging understanding of the complexity of our history.

Preparing and training teachers to educate our children and young people to be effective and responsible members of a shared society.

Providing further, higher and adult education on an open and integrated basis.

2.4.1   The Department of Education (DE) has a duty under the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 to "encourage and facilitate integrated education". It also has a duty under S75 (2) to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between groups specified in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Education is pivotal to the search for an inclusive, reconciled and open society built on trust, partnership, equality and mutual respect.

2.4.2   The education system in Northern Ireland is a complex one, perhaps uniquely so. It comprises a range of different school types that reflect the diversity of society and the range of parental preferences for children.

2.4.3   There are now some 55 formally integrated schools with over 17,000 pupils across Northern Ireland. This represents around 5% of the total number of

pupils in schools in Northern Ireland. The remainder are educated either in Controlled (largely Protestant) or Maintained (mainly Catholic) schools. In 2001/2002, 5% of pupils in Controlled schools were from a Catholic tradition and 1% of pupils in Maintained schools were from a Protestant background.

2.4.4   For some, integrated education is seen as a barometer of good relations between and within communities in Northern Ireland. However, a move towards greater sharing in education, as a whole, is perhaps more important.

2.4.5   The exercise of parental choice is central and both **integrated and denominational schools have important roles to play in preparing children for their role as adults in a shared society.** There is a balance to be struck, however, between the exercise of this choice and the significant additional costs and potential diseconomies that this diversity of provision generates, particularly in a period of demographic downturn and falling rolls.

2.4.6   It is recognised that major investment is required across much of the school stock and in rural areas, especially, where pupil numbers are falling. In this regard the work ongoing to review educational estate delivery mechanisms, which it is proposed should be across all sectors, is extremely important. Greater sharing in education means exploring new and innovative ways of sharing these scarce resources responsibly into the future. **The education system, therefore, represents a major opportunity to create greater sharing and address the potential diseconomies of duplication.**

2.4.7   It is essential that the challenges of diversity and tolerance are consciously integrated into the development curriculum of each child in all school sectors, so that **every child leaves school with a direct and sustained engagement with diversity and is better equipped to meet the challenges of being an adult in a shared society.**

2.4.8   The new cross-curricular theme of local and global citizenship has the potential to make a significant contribution to understanding the causes of conflict between and within communities both in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the world. **To make a real impact it is essential that this work tackles the reality of living in a divided society.**

2.4.9   The proposed pupil entitlement framework arising from the post-primary review (Costello report) will be delivered by collaboration between neighbouring schools and with further education colleges and other providers. This will provide young people in post-primary education with

greater opportunities for sharing part of their learning and educational experiences with young people from different communities, and the opportunity to cross the traditional community divide in educational provision. This could, for example, include schools sharing sports facilities and open opportunities to learn subjects not readily available within one particular school or sector. Local partnerships of schools and further education colleges will be key drivers in this process.

2.4.10   There have also been important developments within education towards a more inclusive society over the past ten years. These have been designed, not only to encourage greater contact and promote mutual understanding between communities in Northern Ireland, but to help young people understand their own heritage and tradition more fully, in order to help build the community confidence and capacity to begin to look outward and engage with others. Many pupils have participated in initiatives based on the cross-curricular themes of Cultural Heritage and Education for Mutual Understanding and those funded through the Schools Community Relations Programme. These programmes have encouraged children and young people, from the basis of a greater understanding of their own roots, to understand the essence of reconciliation and the importance of building relationships grounded in mutual recognition and trust. In the revised curriculum shortly to be implemented, these themes will continue as integral parts of the Citizenship Programme.

2.4.11   As the education system and the further and higher education sectors move forward to meet the challenges of the next decades, both must play their role in helping shape policy and practice to promote greater sharing. **Both need actively to prepare teachers and lecturers to educate children and young people for a shared society. While not all schools will be designated as integrated, all educational institutions should demonstrate their organisational commitment to a shared society.**

2.4.12   Finally, the youth sector, in particular, has an important role to play in developing coherent programmes to promote good relationships between children and young people within and between communities. The JEDI initiative (Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence) is one model that could be built on across the sector. It is recommended that this successful programme should be developed throughout the youth service, including integrating its lessons into the training of youth workers.

Further and Higher Education

2.4.13   The *'Promoting and Managing Diversity in Tertiary Education Advisory Group'* aims to provide a forum bringing together individuals, colleges and agencies with an interest in promoting good practice in the development and implementation of community relations strategies for institutions of further and higher education in Northern Ireland.

2.4.14   During the last 30 and more years of civil and political upheaval in Northern Ireland, the further education sector has **continued to play an important role in community integration and good relations.** Throughout this period, further education colleges have been providing a wide range of education and training provision for people of all ages, drawn from various socio-economic and community backgrounds, in a neutral and harmonious environment. Indeed, for many, this learning experience may have been the first time in their lives that they have met someone from the 'other side', in a non-threatening and non-confrontational setting.

2.4.15   The further education sector continues to promote and advance good relations. A cultural diversity/good relations – 'Good Practice' working document has recently been developed specifically for further education colleges. In tandem with this working document, the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is also funding three innovative cultural diversity pilot projects, to breakdown barriers between students, both existing and prospective. In addition, research has been commissioned into possible 'chill factors' that discourage students from studying in particular colleges or particular locations.

2.4.16   Teachers influence greatly the lives of our children and young people and **have a key role to play in helping to develop an inclusive society built on trust and mutual respect.** Consequently, the universities and institutions with responsibility for training new teachers have a key role to play in **preparing them to teach about living and working in a shared society and helping children and young people to respect each other's values and differences.** This begins with the universities and teacher training institutions themselves needing to provide opportunities for their students to share some training with their peers in other institutions and to work with experienced teachers in schools of different types.

2.4.17   Finally, the current review of further and higher education and the decisions taken following the review of post-primary education provide an excellent opportunity to show how we can most effectively serve the needs of our communities through the best educational provision.

Proposed Action

2.4.18   Detailed actions will be outlined in the triennial action plan. These will specifically address measures to incentivise ways of integrating education and shared teacher training.

2.4.19   In shaping actions on the former, the Department of Education should consider bringing forward the recommendations contained in its draft report **'Towards a Culture of Tolerance – Integrating Education'.** Also it will, for example:

- co-ordinate action involving schools, teacher training, curricular development and the youth service to promote good relations;

- encourage and facilitate integrated education and greater integration in education;

- ensure that the challenges of diversity and tolerance are consciously integrated into the development curriculum of each child in all school sectors, so that every child leaves school with a direct and sustained engagement with the challenges of being an adult in a shared society; and

- develop the successful JEDI programme throughout the youth service, including integrating its lessons into the training of youth workers.

2.4.20   The Department for Employment and Learning, for its part, will:

- continue to ensure that further, higher and adult education are provided on the basis of being open and integrated;

- influence the curriculum in universities and institutions preparing new teachers to provide opportunities for them to share training with their peers in other institutions; and

- during teaching practice, to work with experienced teachers in schools of different types.

2.5 Shared Communities

> **Developing shared communities where people of all backgrounds can live, work, learn and play together.**
>
> **Supporting and protecting existing areas where people of different backgrounds live together.**

2.5.1   Since 1998 the Government has been committed to exploring ways of providing mixed housing. The **Housing Executive is committed to promoting mixed housing where it is practicable, desirable and safe.** With less than 10% of social housing integrated, segregation gets in the way of meeting need and prevents the best use of housing and land. According to the Housing Executive there are an estimated 400 families with a mixed background on its waiting list.

2.5.2   Figures in recent years also show that approximately 10% of those who were homeless have cited intimidation as the reason. SPED (Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings) is a scheme operated by the Housing Executive that allows for the purchase of an owner/occupied property where that owner has been intimidated or threatened. The present scheme was introduced under Article 29 of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988.

2.5.3   Segregation that results from endemic fear and threat is unacceptable in a democratic society. The Housing Executive's strategy will be directed to remove fear and intimidation from all housing decisions relating to residential location. In addition, **residence in a particular area should be a matter of housing need or personal choice** rather than an insistence that only 'one sort or one colour' live on certain streets or districts. In developing this policy in coming years, NIHE will need the close co-operation of community leaders, local councils, the police and community safety organisations.

2.5.4   In April 2004 the Housing Executive announced its intention to work with the Department for Social Development, Housing Associations and others to bring proposals forward for two pilot projects of integrated housing in the medium-term. The Executive recognises that such projects cannot be uniformly imposed. However, **applicants wishing to live in areas where people of all backgrounds are welcome should have a real choice.** Trust and safety will ultimately dictate the pace of change and so the expectations of any policy must be realistic. Details of these proposals will be brought

forward by the Housing Executive and will be included in the actions that follow from this document.

2.5.5   Finally, the NIHE will continue to work collaboratively with others to promote good relations to **provide stable and safer neighbourhoods**. The establishment of the new Community Cohesion Unit will drive forward its good relations policy. The NIHE will play its role through partnership in promoting good relations to facilitate a more inclusive diverse society. **Innovative preventative measures will continue with Groundwork Northern Ireland and others to address conflict, exclusion and the management of contested places.**

Proposed Action

2.5.6   The Department for Social Development, through the Housing Executive will:

- ensure that residence in a particular area should be a matter of housing need or personal choice rather than an insistence that only 'one sort' live on certain streets or districts.

2.5.7   The Housing Executive should, as a matter of priority:

- bring forward as soon as practicable its proposed pilot schemes on integrated housing;

- ensure that applicants wishing to live in areas where people of all backgrounds are welcome should have a real choice, subject to availability;

- consider how best, in consultation with PSNI and others, to protect mixed housing areas; and

- continue, through the new Community Cohesion Unit, to support relationship building at neighbourhood level.

2.5.8   Detailed actions will be contained in the triennial action plan.

2.6   Supporting Good Relations through Diversity and Cultural Diversity

> **Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) aims to increase respect and tolerance of different cultures and communities within Northern Ireland. In particular, it will:**
>
> -   **encourage understanding of the complexity of our history, through museums, libraries and archives;**
> -   **support cultural projects which highlight the complexity and overlapping nature of identities and their wider global connections;**
> -   **develop cultural capital through the principles of creativity learning and diversity.**

2.6.1   A shared society, which is our goal, is at ease with wide individual diversity, from which dynamism and vitality stem. It is held together by a willingness to engage in dialogue, on a basis of equality and by a commitment to the common good — by a *culture of tolerance*.

2.6.2   The building of our cultural capital is an innovative component of our strategic thinking that complements our economic and social capital. It explains 'difference' and creates the conditions for success in terms of promoting and developing understanding and respect.

2.6.3   DCAL's vision is of a society that develops and flourishes, becoming more informed and proud of its cultural identity, a society where we unlock our latent creativity, to become even more vibrant and confident in the future.

2.6.4   An individual or a community's identity is evident, both internally and to 'others', by markers which are most frequently 'cultural' – that is as a result of learned behaviour or habits – and since conflict involves demonising or stereotyping others on the basis of these cultural identity markers, it follows that addressing diversity through culture is crucial to *'promoting good relations'*.

2.6.5   For Government and public authorities, cultural diversity policy involves defining their obligation to serve and allow expression to the different cultures that society contains, in ways which are equitable and which encourage understanding and tolerance.

2.6.6   For individuals and groups, cultural diversity involves the opportunity to express one's own culture, and to experience the expression of other

cultures, in formal and informal contexts, in ways which are fair, inclusive, safe, tolerant and enjoyable.

2.6.7   Implicit in the term 'cultural diversity', in the many contexts in which it is used, is the notion of tolerance, or the aim for tolerance and understanding which leads to respect of varied cultural expressions and needs.

2.6.8   When the term 'different' cultures is used it is usually in a context in which the 'difference' (in itself an observer's description) gives rise to conflict – either in the form of exclusion, partisan administration or systems, or triumphalism. In aspirational and/or optimistic contexts, 'cultural diversity' is seen as a potentially celebratory situation that encompasses and gives voice to the richness that varied communities can contribute to the greater society of which they are part.

2.6.9   The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has an important role to play in promoting cultural diversity to unlock the richness therein.

2.6.10   For the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, cultural diversity finds expression in many ways, including:
-       the collections of museums, galleries and libraries;
-       the creative and performing arts;
-       sports;
-       documents retained in archives.

2.6.11   The culture of all groups resident in Northern Ireland is: held in documents retained in the **archives**; detailed, analysed and explored in books in **libraries**; shown in the collections of **museums and galleries**; expressed in the arts – drama, music, visual art etc **sports/traditional ritual** – religious and secular, articulated through **languages** – English, Irish, Ulster-Scots, Mandarin, Hindi, Cantonese.

2.6.12   Cultural diversity policies are necessary to accommodate the range of ideologies and interests of the long-resident communities in Northern Ireland and to promote inclusive policies and activities that recognise newer residents as fully integrated communities.

2.6.13   As the Department with responsibility for culture, DCAL has a duty both to support the diverse cultures in Northern Ireland and to ensure the widest possible opportunity for people to express their own, and have access to other cultures. The corporate policy of DCAL is based on three cross-cutting themes of creativity, learning and diversity. It has identified the desire for

participation in cultural activity – principally in the fields of arts, creativity, learning, sport, and heritage and on their needs as participants or producers, be they audiences or consumers.

2.6.14   DCAL will contribute to a good relations policy by promoting an increased understanding of cultural diversity actively as a central and permanent element of its core business. Specifically, it can mainstream cultural diversity in a number of ways.

Museums

2.6.15   Museums will contribute to the good relations policy by:

- ensuring that the collections are representative of the diversity which both have been and are present in the geographical area from which local visitors come and those places and domains which represent their interests, affiliations and concerns;

- ensuring that both permanent and temporary exhibitions represent and examine the interests of all the communities that the museum chiefly serves;

- devising exhibitions and supporting educational programmes/outreach work which address issues pertinent to the culturally diversity of the geographical area served.

Libraries

2.6.16   Libraries will contribute to the good relations policy by:

- providing neutral venues available to all for pursuing cultural activities;

- making books and materials available to minority ethnic communities in their own languages;

- providing free access to a wealth of information through the Internet; and

- collecting and preserving historical and cultural materials produced by, or of significance to, local communities, e.g. The Omagh Bomb Archive.

Arts

2.6.17   In the area of arts for example, it should build on the important work being developed by the Arts Council in 'Art in Contested Space'. This programme is very much earthed in the good relations approach and complements other important work being taken forward by Creating Common Ground consortium which involves the Housing Executive, Groundwork NI and the community to address the physical manifestation of contested space. Multi-ethnic projects are also encouraged by the 'Promoting Intercultural Programme' which is run by the Arts Council with CRC. It aims to support and foster arts projects with long-established residents in joint arts activities.

Sport

2.6.18   We need to build on the excellent work within sport to promote relationship building. There is **strong evidence that sport can support and underpin cross community contact, contact between people of different races and positively promote greater tolerance and respect**, particularly when participants are introduced to new sports and sports which are non-traditional, for example, the introduction of rugby into schools which traditionally play Gaelic games. Youth Sport also provides the opportunity for children to sample a range of sports. The new community sport programme focusing on socially deprived areas is designed to promote community development through sport and there is a cultural diversity dimension to this initiative. The work undertaken by the Irish Football Association to deal with sectarianism and racism under their 'Football for All campaign' is worthy of note in this context.

Public Records

2.6.19   DCAL supports a range of archival services. In addition to Northern Ireland's integrated archival service in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, which brings together the documented community memory from many official and private sources, there are many libraries, museums and private archive collections. These also reflect the actual history of Northern Ireland, the richness of both the shared and the diverse experiences that have moulded communities and the interactions between the people of Northern Ireland and many different parts of the world. These **rich resources need to be supported and exploited more fully and in such a way as to make them readily available to everyone.** Hence, the investment in the Electronic Catalogue for Northern Ireland (eCATNI), which will give on-line access to the detailed descriptive lists created over the last 80 years and thus open up archives hitherto little known.

Language Diversity

2.6.20   In addition to English, many other languages are used in Northern Ireland, including indigenous minority languages (Irish, Ulster-Scots, and British and Irish Sign Languages) and minority ethnic languages (such as Cantonese, Portuguese, Cant and Arabic). Research[2] which mapped minority ethnic languages in Northern Ireland reveals over 50 languages, most of which are in daily use here and all of which are an important part of our both shared and diverse cultural heritage. Our different languages are an intrinsic part of our cultural capital.

2.6.21   Language diversity policy, on which DCAL is in the lead, has the potential to make a contribution to the promotion of good relations in Northern Ireland. Government recognises the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various minority ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland. DCAL also aims to support people who use British and Irish Sign Languages in Northern Ireland.

2.6.22   DCAL and its Agencies have been supporting projects that celebrate our language heritage, such as the language symposium at Queen's University, Belfast, and the work of the Linen Hall Library in Belfast.

2.6.23   A particular project to note is the work of the Columba Initiative (Iomairt Cholm Cille: ICC), a link between Irish and Scottish Gaelic speakers jointly funded by Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

2.6.24   DCAL co-sponsors the North/South Language Body, a cross-border body divided into two parts: Foras na Gaeilge promotes the Irish language and Tha Boord o Ulstèr Scotch promotes Ulster-Scots language and culture.

2.6.25   Irish and Ulster-Scots are recognised by the UK Government under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. An Inter-departmental Charter Implementation Group, chaired by DCAL and including all NI Departments, has developed guidance for public servants to help them meet their obligations under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

[2]   In Other Words? Daniel Holder Multi-Cultural Resource Centre NI 2003.

Irish Language Broadcast Fund

2.6.26   The Government is committed to take all the necessary steps to secure the establishment of a fund for financial support for Irish language film and television production. A fund has been established that aims to deliver at least 75 additional hours' Irish language broadcasting per year by 2007-2008. The Northern Ireland Film and Television Commission will be delivering the fund.

Ulster-Scots Academy

2.6.27   The Government is committed to take steps to encourage support to be made available to an Ulster Scots Academy. DCAL has a Public Service Agreement target to deliver a fully functioning Academy by 2007.

Minority Ethnic Community Languages

2.6.28   DCAL leads a thematic group on language operating under the auspices of the Northern Ireland Race Forum. The group, which is a partnership between representatives of several ethnic minority groups and public service providers will make policy proposals to the Race Forum on the use of minority ethnic languages across public services.

Sign Languages

2.6.29   In March 2004, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced recognition of British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) as languages in their own right. He also announced that the NI Departments would work together, in partnership with representatives of the deaf community, to develop ideas for improving access to public services by users of sign languages.

2.6.30   The Sign Language Partnership Group is bringing forward proposals to improve the supply of sign language tutors and interpreters and to raise awareness of sign language issues here. The group is also looking at best practice elsewhere.

Cultural Diversity Training

2.6.31   Cultural diversity training is vital in a divided society that is becoming more multi-cultural. An increasing number of posts in the cultural and educational sector require 'cultural diversity' knowledge, which for most people working in

Northern Ireland has been achieved post their formal education, and individually and somewhat randomly, from a variety of sources.

2.6.32   While several institutions, for example, University of Ulster, Workers Education Association, Ulster People's College, Nerve Centre, Community Relations Council and the Northern Ireland Minorities Council have produced resources and run occasional courses, there is a need for regular and sustained, easy-entry, accredited courses in cultural diversity which is delivered via one of the educational establishments, through the life-long learning/external student departments. The development of appropriate curricula should continue to be supported by CRC, OFMDFM, DEL, DCAL and other departments.

2.6.33   Accreditation (say at an NVQ-level) would be useful, both for individuals wishing to engage in cultural diversity/good relations work and for those organisations wishing to establish posts to undertake it. Cultural diversity professionalism is one way of ensuring that committed individuals are attracted and sustained in good relations work that is treated seriously at all levels. Currently cultural diversity work is undertaken (mostly with European or CRC funding) in a number of publicly funded agencies and bodies.

Proposed Action

2.6.34   Detailed proposals will be set out in the triennial action plan.

2.7   Developing Shared Workplaces

Building on the work of employers and trades' unions, begin a new dialogue about relationships within a safe environment and shared workplaces.

The Equality Commission and the Community Relations Council should open up a dialogue with employers and trades' unions about developing good relations in the workplace. A particular focus of this will be in relation to migrant workers.

2.7.1   Arising from action by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, employers and trades' unions particularly in the context of implementing The Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 Northern Ireland, workplaces have become more integrated and working environments more harmonious.

2.7.2 The Government has been **greatly encouraged by, and acknowledges, the collaborative work of trades' unions and employers to challenge sectarianism and racism in the workplace and in wider society.**

2.7.3 A number of important recent developments will support this work. First, Government applauds the initiatives taken by the Equality Commission and the Race Forum to address racism and support migrant workers. Second, the publication of the Community Relations Council's good relations framework for organisations, and the Equity, Diversity and Interdependence framework developed by the University of Ulster. Third, the Equality Commission has used its important links with employers to address racism in society.

2.7.4 The Equality Commission recently organised a seminar for employers who employ or who are interested in employing migrant workers. Key outcomes of the seminar which the Commission wish to achieve are:

- commitment from employers to develop race equality plans;

- possible development of a race/migrant workers' employers' forum that could feed directly into the larger Race Forum established by government; and

- an opportunity to support organisations by providing race equality services.

2.7.5 These initiatives have the potential to build significantly on the very positive developments that have been initiated in the workplace.

2.7.6 Government will continue to support employers and trades' unions and will work with key stakeholders and other interests to develop structures, policies and practices for the workplace that **encourage and enable dialogue and engagement that help build relationships and move beyond neutrality and silence.**

2.7.7 Finally, in a modern economy, the capacity of workers to access their place of work in safety is a critical factor in ensuring free mobility of labour.

Proposed Action

2.7.8 Government, in consultation with the Equality Commission, the Community Relations Council, employers and trades' unions, will bring forward proposals to ensure that access routes to places of employment are free of overt sectarian or racist displays.

2.7.9   The Equality Commission and CRC will:

- build on the work of employers and trades' unions and begin a new dialogue about relationships within a safe environment and shared workplaces; and

- build on their work with employers and trades' unions to challenge sectarianism and racism, and consider, in particular, the issues affecting migrant workers.

2.7.10   Detailed proposals will be set out in the triennial action plan.

2.8   Good Relations, Community Development and Tackling Disadvantage

> **The Community Relations Unit in OFMDFM and the Voluntary and Community Unit in DSD will increasingly develop linked strategies.**
>
> **Identify best practice in the development of coherent community development and good relations practice.**
>
> **Any project, whether single identity or cross community, will in future be tested in relation to the quality of the outcomes and its ability to promote the building of good relationships.**

2.8.1   Sectarianism and racism have particularly negative impacts on disadvantaged communities. **Disadvantaged and segregated communities are less likely to benefit from improved public services and a growing economy.** Relative wealth in divided middle class communities insulates residents from the difficulties sectarian division creates; violence, intimidation and poor public services. The difficulties with inappropriate and aggressive displays of flags and emblems, the damage this causes to the economy and the downgrading of the physical environment are a visual and persistent symbol of that disadvantage and separation.

2.8.2   Northern Ireland has benefited from an active and effective community development sector, which has provided much support to disadvantaged communities, particularly during the last 35 years of conflict.

2.8.3   As we strive towards the creation of a more peaceful society, effective community development work will be a key factor, but it will need to shift up a gear. **Good community development work must help communities**

develop internally and externally. The increasing segregation of communities over past years was, in many respects, a fact of life, driven in part, by communities' need for safety. Community development practice adapted to that situation. It is now imperative, however, to build relationships between communities and to work to reduce the tension and violence associated with sectarianism and segregation.

2.8.4   Community development, 'single identity' and community relations work in divided and disadvantaged communities must become an integrated programme of activities. In this regard there must be much **closer working together of government agencies responsible for community development and good relations.**

Harnessing Community Development and Community Relations Work

2.8.5   The potential of addressing the problems of disadvantaged communities will significantly depend on closely **aligning community development and community relations work.** Community development in disadvantaged communities is largely delivered through the work of the voluntary and community sector that has made a powerful contribution to the achievement of better relations between communities. There are, however, major obstacles to be overcome in the further development of a community development practice that sees community relations at its core.

2.8.6   *Investing Together*, the Report of the Task Force on *Resourcing the Voluntary and Community Sector* identifies the importance of the community development work of the sector and the contribution this work plays to building community cohesion. It is important, therefore, that the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to deliver community development is maintained and reinforced.

2.8.7   That capacity, however, must be strengthened through mechanisms that also **reinforce the delivery of good relations outcomes**. The recommendations of *Investing Together* focus on skills development in the voluntary and community sector. **Any skills development strategy must have good relations work at its core.**

2.8.8   *Investing Together* also recommends that a review of support services for the voluntary and community sector be carried out. Support services for the sector do and will continue to play a central role in working though the sector across communities. The terms of reference for the review should include a requirement to consider how change and development of infrastructure and

support services for the voluntary and community sector can best contribute to good relations.

2.8.9   In recent years there has been considerable focus on the difficulties of alienated working class communities. It should not be assumed that the needs of protestant and catholic communities, whether urban or rural, can be met through similar approaches to community development and community relations work. **The needs of the two main communities - urban and rural - will be different and, therefore, different approaches to community development and building good relations will be required.**

Single Identity Work?

2.8.10   Is there a case for single identity intervention? Single identity work within the context of conflict resolution has been defined by INCORE as:

"work that engages a group of common identity within a divided society, hence in Northern Ireland, groups of either Protestants or Catholics. It aims to increase confidence in order to allow initiatives on a cross-community level to develop. It is part of an inclusive process."

2.8.11   In order to address fears, suspicions and concerns it may be necessary first to develop single identity projects. Those promoting single identity work sometimes question the assumption of 'mutual understanding' work and recognise that lack of contact with the 'other' limits political co-operation. On the other hand work focusing across community barriers is likely to be limited unless work designed to facilitate discussion within individual communities is also carried out.

2.8.12   Many commentators and evaluators have, however, expressed three legitimate concerns about this work. First, that single identity work may reinforce entrenched attitudes and stereotypes and avoid reality. Second, there is a concern that single identity work becomes an excuse, delaying the shift from work 'within' a community to cross community work. Third, single identity work can only ever be partial in a community where others share the public space.

2.8.13   Whilst Government wants to support activities that build confidence within and between communities, **approaches that reinforce segregation must be challenged.** In this respect all community development programmes should be required to identify how they will address sectarian and or racist behaviour to enable communities to work more effectively together and identify the expected good relations outcomes of their work.

2.8.14   It may be that isolated and alienated communities will require a community development approach that focuses first on internal relationships. **This must take place, however, in the context of an approach that recognises and addresses segregation as a problem.**

2.8.15   In summary, some single identity work promotes real confidence while some merely serves as an excuse to avoid the inevitable. Likewise, not all cross-community work promotes real trust. In supporting any project, whether it is described as cross-community or single identity, the **test is not the structure itself but the quality of the outcomes and whether they do in fact promote good relationship-building work.**

Proposed Action

2.8.16   The triennial action plan will include detailed proposals setting out how the Government will progress an integrated approach to community development, good relations and reconciliation. The action plan will draw together measures influenced by the best practice in reducing division and building relationships.

2.8.17   Best practice will be drawn from the practitioners in community development, good relations and reconciliation, including those who have worked on a north-south and east-west axis. Many voluntary and community organisations, for example, women's organisations, disability organisations, health projects, children's organisations, victims' groups, church and other faith-based organisations, trades' unions, minority ethnic groups and youth organisations have demonstrated considerable expertise in community development work sensitive to good relations needs and this should be considered when modelling future approaches. In regard to reconciliation, the Government will consider the work, for example, of Corrymeela, the Irish School of Ecumenics, Co-operation Ireland, Mediation Northern Ireland, INCORE, One Small Step, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Future Ways and other key organisations supporting victims and survivors.

2.9   Ensuring that Voice is Given to Victims

> **Ensuring that voice is given to the diverse victims of conflict in Northern Ireland, including via archives and victim-centred reconciliation events.**

2.9.1   In a written statement to Parliament on 1 March 2005 the Secretary of State set out how he proposed to carry forward the existing victims strategy

Reshape, Rebuild, Achieve published by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in April 2002. It is concerned with the delivery of services to victims and survivors of Northern Ireland's troubles and how these services might be better co-ordinated and planned.

2.9.2   A key part of the consultation paper relates to the establishment of a Commissioner for Victims and Survivors. Taken as a whole this paper is intended to pave the way for a strategy which will:

- provide a comprehensive approach to the provision of services for victims and survivors; and

- ensure, through the appointment of a Commissioner for Victims and Survivors and the establishment of a victims' and survivors' forum, that services for victims and survivors are directed in a way which promotes the welfare of all those who have suffered as a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

2.9.3   In bringing forward detailed proposals, account has been taken of work carried out by Angela Smith, the Minister with responsibility for victims.

Proposed Action

2.9.4   The triennial action plan will outline how the next phase of victims' policy can dovetail with the outworking of the good relations policy.

2.10   Shared Services

> **There is an economic imperative to address the costs of division, while recognising concerns around safety and security.**
>
> **The Government will initiate a programme of research to identify and monitor the costs of delivering public services in a divided society. This programme will inform triennial reports to the Assembly on the 'health' of community relations in Northern Ireland.**
> **All departments should consider how their policies and programmes might better promote good relations.**

2.10.1   In bringing forward the consultation, initial work was undertaken to try and quantify the impact on public expenditure of providing public services to a polarised society. That work attempted to identify the direct costs of civil unrest and security which fall to the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and the

associated costs that have to be picked up by Northern Ireland Departments, for example the financial burden that falls to health and social services for the treatment of victims and survivors; to Roads Service to repair road surfaces damaged during civil disturbances (approx £250k is set aside each year); to education for the repair of buildings that have suffered arson attacks and other security costs associated with civil unrest (in 1998 some £4.7m spent on repairing damage and approximately one quarter of its £1m annual vandalism bill is a direct result of the security situation); to Housing in administering the SPED scheme.

2.10.2   The exercise also attempted to quantify the additional costs in relation to the additional expense to the public purse of providing public services in a polarised society. For example, the annual budget spent on community relations to help build relations, increase understanding, and support groups at interfaces; additional expenditure in the area of tourism and inward investment over the years to counteract Northern Ireland's poor image; and loss of revenue from attractions as a result of civil unrest.

2.10.3   The initial work also considered the extent to which policy and services had adapted to the development of two very distinct communities and the extent to which the limited mobility of people resulted in some services, which could otherwise have operated from a single location, being duplicated in each community – costs of duplicating services. For example the following areas were looked at: community health services, transport (bus routes), housing, job centres, teacher training, library and sporting services.

2.10.4   This work concluded the following:

(a)   The **direct costs** of a polarised society are the financial impact of civil strife. The majority of these costs are contained within reserved expenditure areas and are, therefore, borne by the Northern Ireland Office, however a number of Northern Ireland departments also face additional capital costs when property is damaged and services are disrupted.

(b)   The cost of the potential **duplication of services** within the two communities affects more than departments. Inter-community mobility is low in some regions, particularly so in densely populated, socially disadvantaged regions. People are unwilling to cross into areas perceived as dangerous to avail of public services, and in response some services have been duplicated in both communities. Services affected by this include community health centres, job centres, public housing and public transport.

(c) The divided community within Northern Ireland creates an environment where provision of public services is more expensive and additional community relations services are required. These **additional costs** span a large number of departments and range from programmes introduced to break down social barriers between communities to additional expenditure required to attract visitors to the region.

2.10.5 The Government continues to work to provide services that are focused on delivering the outcomes that all of the citizens in Northern Ireland need and expect.

2.10.6 **The Government recognises that division, and the tensions and conflict that it causes, has almost certainly reduced the cost effectiveness of public service provision.** The causes of division are complex and the understanding of these causes and their associated costs will be an important dimension of the work that will flow from the new strategic framework and policy on good relations.

Proposed Action

2.10.7 Government will, in preparing its triennial reports to the Assembly on the 'health' of community/good relations in Northern Ireland:

- initiate a programme of research to identify and monitor the costs of delivering public services in a divided society; and

- ask all departments to consider how their policies and programmes might better promote good relations, bearing in mind the public expenditure implications.

2.10.8 Detailed proposals will be included in the triennial action plan.

Part 3

Making it happen at central, regional and local government, community and individual level

Summary

- cross-departmental Good Relations Panel to drive forward strategic framework and policy
- triennial action plans, including report on the 'health' of community/good relations, with annual progress reports to the Assembly
- OFMDFM to have enhanced policy and challenge role
- leadership required at all levels: political, civic and community
- government policies will positively promote good relations
- enhanced and broadly based Community Relations Council
- enhanced district council Good Relations Challenge Programme
- review of community relations legislation

3. Actions at central, regional and local government, community and individual level

3.1 Action at Central Government Level

- **Government will make a long-term commitment to improving relations in Northern Ireland.**
- **Establish a cross departmental Good Relations Panel, chaired by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, to prepare a co-ordinated triennial plan, underpinned by S75.**
- **These plans will be reviewed annually and rolled forward.**
- **Policies, practices and institutions will be shaped to enable trust and good relations to grow.**
- **Review the current community relations legislation.**
- **OFMDFM to develop an enhanced policy and challenge role backed up by research capacity, monitoring and evaluation.**

3.1.1 Government, recognising its statutory duty under Section 75 (2) that "without prejudice to its obligations under S75 (1), a public authority shall in carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group", **will make a long-term commitment to improving relations** in Northern Ireland, including the associated investment of time, resources and effort. **A triennial action plan covering actions across public authorities will be prepared, progressed, monitored and reviewed.**

3.1.2 Through this policy and strategic framework for good relations in Northern Ireland the Government will:

- place the promotion of good relations at the centre of policy, practice and delivery of public services;

- underscore the fundamental principles of the approach to good relations;

- establish greater clarity on the respective roles of all key stakeholders;

- underscore the need for all of society to play a role in promoting good relations;

- put in place a clear legal, statutory and policy framework for this approach;

- promote joined up approaches across the Northern Ireland Administration, the NIO, PSNI and other public authorities;

- seek to support staff in public authorities in their work to promote good relations; and

- establish the process of triennial action plans (to which district council good relations plans and actions will be linked).

3.1.3   **Government policies have the potential to improve relationships.** This is specifically the case in the areas of education, housing, culture, sports, arts, neighbourhood and rural renewal and community development. It is also the case that other policy areas including spatial or regional planning, sub-regional planning, including local statutory planning, transportation and investment and support for the economy can, if harnessed, contribute positively. Departments and agencies will, having regard to all other competing priorities, actively and demonstrably **seek to shape policy and practice such that it supports the Government's priority of promoting good relations.**

3.1.4   A cross-departmental group (a Good Relations Panel) chaired by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, supported by officials in OFMDFM, will report to Ministers. The panel, which will include senior representatives from key departments, representatives from local government, the Housing Executive, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Equality Commission, the Community Relations Council and other key stakeholders will **harness actions across government.**

3.1.5   This group will co-ordinate long-term actions, advise on the targeting of resources and monitor outcomes. The group will develop the illustrative actions in Part 2 of this policy document. It will be **important to promote joined up coherent action to promote relationship building**. The panel will also establish a mechanism to involve, on an ongoing basis, wider civic society in shaping a triennial action plan.

3.1.6   A triennial action plan will be prepared with annual reports on progress provided to Ministers, the Northern Ireland Assembly or the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, in the absence of devolution. These reports will be informed, in part, by the ECNI reports on annual progress in respect of Section 75.

3.1.7   The current legislation 'the Community Relations (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1975' under which community relations activity is promoted and funded, is almost 30 years old. It is therefore timely to review that legislation to ensure that it is fit for purpose and takes account of the statutory duty on good relations.

3.1.8   Government believes that public authorities have a special responsibility and duty as employers, policymakers and service providers to promote and foster good relations. They will **set the pace on movement towards a shared society and lead by example.** The following specific actions will be undertaken to underpin this approach.

3.1.9   First, in considering the introduction of a new policy, or reviewing an existing policy, policymakers will be asked to consider **how it might be best delivered to promote good relations.**

3.1.10   A systematic assessment of the good relations impacts of new (or reviewed) policies and legislation will be introduced across departments. This will require departments, as part of integrated impact assessments, to assess the impact of proposed policies on the promotion of sharing, in a similar way to which policies are currently assessed for their impact upon equality and the targeting of social need. It is important that **the consideration of good relations is part of the daily focus of staff in departments and agencies, as well as a central theme in their delivery of public services.** Detailed guidance on the assessment process will be provided by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. This material will supplement ECNI guidance on good relations.

3.1.11   Second, Departments, public authorities and sponsored bodies will be asked to use the good relations framework guidelines published by the Community Relations Council or the *'Equity, Diversity and Interdependence Framework'* published by the University of Ulster. Both are excellent examples of practical guidance to address the promotion of good relations, through a process of facilitation and development with recognised, measurable outcomes. The good relations framework assists organisations in producing a statement of commitment to good relations, to carry out internal and external exercises and develop an understanding of managing relationships within their everyday work. Copies of the framework are available from the website www.community-relations.org.uk.

3.2 Action at Regional Level

> - **Support for a regional body, independent of Government to promote good relations.**
> - **Transform the existing Community Relations Council into an enhanced organisation more broadly representative of civic society with elected representatives.**
> - **Functions to include:**
>   - **challenging progress towards a shared future;**
>   - **connecting actions at regional, sub-regional and local level;**
>   - **providing support, training and guidance to organisations;**
>   - **commissioning of research;**
>   - **promoting good practice (with Equality Commission) within their respective responsibilities;**
>   - **providing funds to support good relations;**
>   - **reporting progress to Ministers and the Assembly.**

3.2.1 Government has considered carefully what additional measures are required at regional level to support actions across the wider community on developing and promoting good relations; to support new initiatives of regional significance, but lacking a specific local base; and to hold district councils to account for their responsibilities.

3.2.2 It is clear from the consultation that there is no support for a new public body. Responses, however, indicated widespread support for a regional body, **independent of government** to promote good relations, support organisations through training and development of good practice and to provide a challenge function across the public sector and wider civic society.

3.2.3 The Government has decided, following careful consideration, that the regional role should be taken forward by an **enhanced and more broadly representative Community Relations Council.** The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister will work with the present Community Relations Council to ensure its transformation as soon as practicable. It will become more broadly representative of civic society and include amongst others, elected representatives, trades' unions and employers' representatives, practitioners from the voluntary and community sector, churches, other faith-based organisations and ethnic minorities.

3.2.4   The functions of the revamped CRC would include for example:

- assisting Government in the development of its triennial plan and actions for good relations;

- delivering on actions falling to it as a result of those plans;

- promoting, in partnership with ECNI, good relations actions in the statutory, private, voluntary and community sectors, youth sector, church and other faith-based sectors within their respective areas of responsibility;

- providing training and development, support, advice, guidance and a source of specialist expertise to district councils, up to and after the Review of Public Administration, in the development of their good relations plans;

- providing a challenge function to district councils specifically, on their good relations plans;

- working in partnership with departments to promote cultural diversity;

- acting as main funding source for voluntary and community organisations to provide innovative community and race relations programmes;

- promoting high risk action e.g., developing and supporting interventions at interfaces and other 'at risk' areas;

- developing and producing good practice advice;

- commissioning and undertaking research;

- preparing a three-year assessment on the 'health' of community relations in Northern Ireland which will form part of the Government's main triennial report which the Assembly or the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee will be invited to consider, debate and report; and

- ensuring that best practice in addressing division and the problems of diversity in Northern Ireland is of international standards, and encourage the flow of ideas and practice on North-South, East-West, European and international levels.

3.2.5   It may be necessary, as part of the review of community relations legislation, to amend the present legislation to ensure that CRC is able effectively to discharge these functions and that there is a seamless transition from the present Community Relations Council to the revamped organisation.

3.2.6   The revamped Community Relations Council will complement the work of the Equality Commission which has a duty to offer advice to public authorities and others in connection to the statutory equality and good relations duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. ECNI is also required to keep under review the effectiveness of these duties. The Commission also has a statutory duty under the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 to promote good relations between persons of different racial groups. The Equality Commission will be consulted on any proposed changes to the current community relations legislation.

Equality Commission

3.2.7   The Equality Commission currently has a statutory remit in respect of enforcing S75 (2). It also has enforcement and advice duties under FETO and Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997.

3.2.8   Much of this work, particularly the audits and annual progress reports, should form part of the Government's triennial report on the community relations/good relations health of Northern Ireland.

3.2.9   Finally, a memorandum of understanding between ECNI and CRC has been prepared and agreed, to define and enhance co-operation. That memorandum will be revised following discussion between ECNI, CRC and OFMDFM on the clarification of the functions and responsibilities of ECNI and the revamped CRC.

The triennial action plan will provide greater detail and clarity on all the arrangements at the regional level.

3.3   Action at Local Government Level

- **Current District Council Community Relations programme to be phased out by March 2007 or in line with changes resulting from the Review of Public Administration.**
- **Creation of a Good Relations Challenge Programme – an enhanced, permanent programme for the promotion of good relations through the new District Council arrangements.**
- **Development by each Council of a 3 year local good relations plan against which funds can be drawn. The plan will be linked to the Government's triennial action plan and reporting arrangements to the Assembly or Westminster.**
- **Plans to be approved by OFMDFM and reviewed annually to ensure satisfactory progress against agreed targets.**
- **The revamped Community Relations Council to provide training and development, support, advice and guidance.**

3.3.1   While actions to promote good relations between and within communities in Northern Ireland will be driven forward by central government, **transformation of local communities requires action at the local level.**

3.3.2   Currently all 26 local Councils participate in a Government sponsored District Council Community Relations Programme. This ensures that each district council has a community relations officer(s) providing a support role for local councils and the capacity to deliver small grant making programmes. The current programme should be phased out and **replaced with a better-resourced and focused programme,** where the chief executive and elected members, along with dedicated good relations staff, play an active role in developing outcomes.

3.3.3   The civic leadership function of district councils should be formally enhanced. Government will, therefore, develop an **enhanced, permanent programme for the promotion of good relations** through district councils. The new scheme will be called the Good Relations Challenge Programme and will be managed by the re-shaped Community Relations Council.

3.3.4   Each district council will be required from April 2007 (or on an agreed date to align with the reconfiguration of local councils under the Review of Public Administration) to prepare a good relations action plan covering employees and local residents. Councils that have not already begun to prepare good relations action plans or strategies will be encouraged to do so. The Good Relations Strategy prepared by Belfast City Council represents an excellent

model, though it is not the only model, that other councils might consider and adapt to local circumstances. In preparation for this change, training in good relations will be made available to both councillors and council officers.

3.3.5   The good relations plans spanning three years will be informed by local dialogue and must be seen to inform other local planning processes. **These plans will represent key components of the Government's triennial action plan**. All councils are now required to develop Community Support Plans that identify how the councils will support their local voluntary and community sector. The Community Support Plans should also identify how councils' good relations plans inform community development and support the voluntary and community sector.

3.3.6   The good relations plans will be submitted to the Community Relations Council. The plans along with recommendations will be forwarded to OFMDFM for approval and the subsequent release of funding by CRC. Community Support Plans are reviewed by the Voluntary and Community Unit of DSD. If a good relations plan or the community support plan is unsatisfactory, respective funding may be withheld. Good Relations Plans will be reviewed annually to ensure satisfactory progress is being achieved towards agreed targets and outcomes. Satisfactory progress will trigger the release of subsequent tranches of funding. Should a council consistently fail to meet its agreed targets and objectives in relation to its good relations plan, the Community Relations Council may recommend to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister that resources are withheld and following discussion with the Department, to initiate agreed action.

3.3.7   Good relations cannot be developed through the delivery of events alone, nor by narrow service delivery. **Local councils need to demonstrate political and administrative agreement on local policies and plans for good relations.** Community/good relations' officers should be central to council priorities and directly accessible to the Chief Executive. For these arrangements to take root it will be important for the community/good relations officers to have the support to develop innovative programmes and networks external to the council. They should also have access to support from the enhanced Community Relations Council.

3.3.8   Full details, including guidance, of the proposed new scheme will be the subject of consultation with councils during 2005 / 2006. **The triennial action plan will provide greater detail and clarity on the arrangements at the local level.**

3.4   Action at Community Level

3.4.1   There is a clear recognition that the voluntary and community sector has made a powerful contribution to the achievement of better relations between communities. It is important that that role is underscored, especially in the most disadvantaged and interface areas. It is recognised also that there is a relationship between community development and community relations. The *Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy* and the *Investing Together* report on resourcing the sector are very important developments. The development of and investment in, social capital – particularly bridging capital – through community development can help promote relationship building within and between communities. This is particularly so in the work being taken forward across government to tackle the problems facing working class areas - particularly, though not confined to, loyalist areas.

3.4.2   Government also recognises the contributions made for example by employers, churches and other faith-based organisations, minority ethnic groups, trades' unions, children's organisations, women's groups, health organisations and youth organisations. These organisations continue to have a role to play in helping build relationships across Northern Ireland. These contributions will be important as Northern Ireland moves forward to a shared society.

3.4.3   It is important for all strands of civic society to play a role at the local level in the preparation of action plans to promote relationship building.

3.5   Financial Implications

3.5.1   The current proposals should not lead to significant public expenditure implications. Indeed, if some of the public expenditure costs of division can be recovered they may provide a windfall for investment either in good relations building or elsewhere across the public service.

3.5.2   The proposals require committed leadership at political and departmental levels and the deployment of current mainstream funding more effectively to promote good relations within an over-arching and co-ordinated framework. Indeed, if the economic imperative of tackling the costs of division is realised then it should, in the long run, lead to a more effective and efficient delivery of public services.

3.5.3   The immediate effect on current community relations funding will be largely neutral and will only become apparent following the development of the triennial action plan. However, action to promote good relations should be readily aligned with the process of existing policy development in areas such as education, regional strategic planning, urban and rural regeneration and culture, arts and leisure. Also, action to promote good relations should be a priority within existing funding programmes.

3.5.4   Finally, the winding down of the current District Council Community Relations Programme to be replaced with a new Good Relations Challenge Programme developed in line with local strategy partnerships, community support and safety strategies, and local integrated plans should again be largely neutral, though these funds may be topped up by switching resources from within the wider community relations programme.

Part 4

Monitoring and evaluation

Summary

• Need for short, medium and long term indicators
• Monitoring by a regional body with annual report to Assembly
• Use of attitudinal, administrative and new sources of data
• Measurement at project, programme and government levels

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

4.1 Improving relationships between and within communities in Northern Ireland is a long-term goal for Government. Therefore, the impact of the policy and strategic framework on good relations must also be measured over the long-term.

4.2 Political or other developments within society have the potential to have immediate impact on a good relations programme in either a positive or negative way. This does not mean to say that short-term change is not important but means that year-on-year changes should be viewed in light of outside factors. Instead, periodic evaluations, surveys and research will show trends from which we will be able to piece together a broad understanding of how life is changing for everyone in Northern Ireland. **OFMDFM will establish a group with representatives from relevant Departments, other organisations and external stakeholders to develop meaningful, measurable and relevant indicators.**

4.3 It will be the responsibility of the revamped Community Relations Council to prepare a triennial assessment of the status of relationships between and within communities in Northern Ireland. This assessment will include a view on the costs of division in Northern Ireland.

4.4 There are a number of factors that will be important in monitoring the success of the policy.

4.5 First, the attitudes and perceptions of individuals are of importance. People's attitudes are affected by a number of factors, such as their personal experiences and those of their friends and family. There are a number of social surveys that periodically monitor the attitudes of the population. Surveys such as the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey and the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey have carried questions asking people their opinions on such topics as sectarianism and racism. Along with these subject areas, future surveys will be reviewed to ensure consistency with the policy and strategic framework to cover areas including:

• attitudes to external relationships – North/South, East/West;

• attitudes to relationships between and within communities in Northern Ireland.

Survey data will be supplemented by other data derived from research including qualitative studies designed to gather detailed information on subjects such as minority groups that cannot be gained through population surveys.

4.6   Second, there are a number of data sets from which we can gain information pertinent to the progress of the good relations policy. For instance, the 2001 census and information from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive gives a picture of communal segregation in Northern Ireland. The Housing Executive can also provide information on the numbers of families intimidated from their homes. Future changes in the amount and level of cross-community contact between children in school are another useful tool.

4.7   Third, the policy will be evaluated on the actions of key stakeholders and the monitoring of actions developed as part of the outworking of this policy. For instance, the new Hate Crime legislation has led to the recording by the police of sectarian, racist and other specified incidents. Also, future actions taken to limit the display of flags and emblems should include indicators of their success.

4.8   Monitoring and evaluation of the good relations policy will draw on experience from the policy agenda known as *'Community Cohesion'*, increasingly being used in inner city areas of Great Britain. Community cohesion is the policy response to the riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford. A report into these disturbances *(Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team 2001)* identified existing schisms in communities that needed to be understood and addressed. The central message is that community cohesion needs to be promoted through increasing knowledge of, contact between and respect for various cultural groups. The aim is to increase community cohesion through promoting a sense of 'citizenship' shared by all.

4.9   It will also be valid to continue monitoring progress at project or programme level. It is here, where the work is being carried out, that an individual's attitudes and behaviours can be changed and where relationships can be built at the local level with local understanding. It is important to capture the picture at this level so that practice can inform policy and the evolution of the good relations policy. Trained staff using tailored monitoring and evaluation techniques can progress individual groups from single identity work through to cross community interaction and relationship building.

4.10   We recognise that there will be methodological and technical difficulties in finding reliable and robust indicators of the impact of the good relations policy and strategic framework. However, a basket of indicators does exist and will be increased through the implementation of the policy, which together will measure its impact.

Part 5

Assessment of Equality Impact of *'A Shared Future'* - Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland

5. Assessment of Equality Impact of *'A Shared Future'* – Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland

5.1 Background

5.1.1 In its first Programme for Government, the Northern Ireland Executive undertook to review and put in place a cross-departmental strategy for the promotion of community relations. This led to the consultation on improving relations in Northern Ireland, *A Shared Future,* which was informed by an earlier report on community relations policy by Dr Jeremy Harbison.

5.1.2 *A Shared Future* was launched on 28 January 2003 and the consultation ended on 30 September 2003. The document set out the vision, policy aims, fundamental principles, actions to be taken at local, regional and central government level, along with proposals for monitoring and evaluation. An assessment of equality impact was also included.

5.1.3 The consultation document stated that "through the consultation process on the proposals in this paper, we also want to consult on their equality impact". Annex A of that document, which used the format recommended in the Equality Commission's Practical Guidance on equality impact assessment, invited consultees to consider if the proposals had any positive or negative impacts on any of the groups included within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and whether there were alternative approaches to the promotion of equality of opportunity and if so, what these were. They were also advised that, taking account of the public consultation, the assessment of equality impact would be completed and taken into account prior to final decisions being made and that a report of the assessment of equality impact would be published.

5.2 Consultation

5.2.1 The consultation on improving relations in Northern Ireland, *A Shared Future*, ended on 30 September 2003. Over 10,000 people were engaged in the process generating more than 500 formal submissions. This represented a broad spectrum of civic society including political parties, voluntary and community organisations, churches and faith-based organisations, employers' organisations, trades' unions, young people and minority ethnic organisations.

5.2.2   Of the responses specifically relating to equality impact, 5 main issues emerged:

- perception that the good relations agenda will be promoted over and above the equality agenda;
- failure to recognise all Section 75 (1) categories within the document;
- failure to clarify what good relations means and how it differs from community relations;
- failure to recognise the role of trades' unions; and
- criticism of the EQIA, suggesting that more needed to be done.

5.3   Good Relations and Equality

5.3.1   Concern was expressed that the equality agenda would be suppressed to promote the good relations agenda. However, we regard equality of opportunity and good relations as complementary and believe that good relations cannot be based on inequality, between different communities or ethnic groups. To add emphasis to this point, the new policy and strategic framework has included as a fundamental principle:

"Progress towards a shared society must be built upon the significant progress that has been achieved in promoting equality of opportunity and human rights."

5.4   Other Equality Groups

5.4.1   Some of those responding considered that the document did not take into account many of the Section 75 (1) categories. This new good relations policy and strategic framework aims to address particular manifestations of community division between the Section 75 (2) categories – persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. This does not diminish the importance of other equality categories and this document represents just one facet of a multi-dimensional approach to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. The approach will be complemented by, in particular, new hate crime legislation which will tackle crimes committed on the basis of racism, disability and homophobia and the Northern Ireland Racial Equality strategy. This will be augmented by work being taken forward by OFMDFM on a Single Equality Bill and strategic actions on sexual orientation, gender equality, people with disabilities, older people and children and young people.

5.5   Community Relations/Good Relations

5.5.1   There was criticism that the terms 'community relations' and 'good relations' were not properly defined. 'Community relations' refers specifically to division between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland. 'Good Relations' refers to Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 which includes persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

5.6   Role of Trades' Unions

5.6.1   There was a specific observation that the contribution of the trade union movement to promoting good relationships between and within communities in Northern Ireland had not been sufficiently recognised in the consultation document. The policy and strategic framework has a specific section on developing shared workplaces (see 2.7ff) which acknowledges the role of trades' unions and others to challenge sectarianism and racism in the workplace and wider society.

5.7   EQIA

5.7.1   Others who responded opined that the consideration of equality impact was deficient. Extensive preliminary consultation was undertaken in the context of the policy review that preceded the *Shared Future* consultation. The review also considered the impact of current policies and existing statistical data. The *Shared Future* consultation, which was informed by the policy review, was also wide-ranging and highly representative. This policy and strategic framework is a high level strategic document. Any new policy commitments arising from it will be subject to an equality impact assessment in line with the equality scheme commitments of the departments who will lead on the policies.

5.8   Assessment of Impacts

5.8.1   The assessment of equality impact included within the consultation document stated "our view is that the policy proposals contained in this paper should not have any negative impact on equality of opportunity for any of the groups. And as these recommendations are built on Section 75 (2) they should positively promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. In addition, we believe that an improvement in relationships, between and within communities, which is the main policy aim of our proposals, should promote greater social cohesion and equality of opportunity for everyone in Northern Ireland".

5.8.2   The comments arising from the consultation have been taken into account in the new policy and strategic framework.

5.9   Decision

5.9.1   Taking account of this assessment of the equality impact and consultation carried out in relation to proposals for improving relations in Northern Ireland, the Department has concluded that proposals outlined in the new good relations policy and strategic framework will make a positive contribution to the promotion of equality of opportunity for everyone in Northern Ireland.

5.10   Publication of Results of Equality Impact Assessment

5.10.1 This assessment of equality impact will be published on OFMDFM's website at www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/communityrelationsunit and copied to those listed in the Equality Scheme.

Community Relations Unit
Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister
Block B, Level 3
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SR
www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk
email: info.cru@ofmdfmni.gov.uk
Telephone: 028 905 22658
Fax: 028 905 28426