



House of Commons
Northern Ireland Affairs
Committee

The Challenge of Diversity: Hate Crime in Northern Ireland: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2004–05

**Fourth Special Report of Session
2005–06**

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The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

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Fourth Special Report

The Committee published its Ninth Report of Session 2004-05 on 8 April 2005. The Government's response from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, was received in the form of a letter and memorandum on 11 July 2005. The response is published as an appendix to this report.

Appendix

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee published on 8 April 2005 a report into hate crime in Northern Ireland: *"The challenge of diversity; hate crime in Northern Ireland."* [HC 548-1]

The report rightly conveys the outrage and abhorrence of all right thinking people that the spectre of hate crime and intolerance should be present, and indeed increasing, in our society.

Government is absolutely committed to eradicating all manifestations of hatred, whether motivated by racism, sectarianism, homophobia, hatred of people with disabilities or based on any other form of intolerance in Northern Ireland.

Government recognises that some responses to date in respect of hate crime against people from minority communities could have been more effective. Much more needs to be done. To that end the Government will pull together a more coherent, co-ordinated and robust response.

The Office of First Minister DFM will lead in co-ordinating a government-wide response to combat racism, racial inequalities, intolerance and hate crime throughout Northern Ireland. Strategic policy initiatives will both spearhead and underpin this co-ordinated and joined-up approach; one that will demonstrate firm and effective leadership on the part of Government in tackling these issues.

The Good Relations Policy and Strategic Framework published on 21 March 2005 coupled with the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland which will be published this month, the strategic action plan on Sexual Orientation and Criminal Justice and Community Safety initiatives will be core elements on this strategic approach.

I attach the Government's formal response to the Committee's report. I should be very grateful if you would pass this on to the members of the Committee in due course. Also attached is a note setting out more detailed comments by way of clarification or further explanation.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Government welcomes the report of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee “The Challenge of Diversity: Hate Crime in Northern Ireland” [HC 548-I] which was published on 8 April.

The inquiry was extremely comprehensive, relevant and focused and the Committee’s interim report was particularly valuable in persuading Government of the need to include hatred of people with disabilities within the scope of legislation to deal with hate crime in Northern Ireland. This legislation has been enacted and is now in force.

Recent years have seen an on-going increase in the number of racist incidents recorded by the police in Northern Ireland as well as increases in recorded incidents involving victims defined by their sexual orientation. In considering what might be done in law to address this problem the Government consulted extensively in Northern Ireland in October 2002 on the policy proposals and again in February 2004 on draft proposals for legislation. Widespread support was received for the proposals, and respondents urged the Government to include provisions to protect individuals who were victims of hate crime as a result of their sexual orientation or disability.

The new provisions bring much needed changes to the law, substantially strengthening the measures available to tackle crime motivated by such hatred. They send out a clear message that offences motivated by hatred will not be tolerated. It is too early to be specific about the impact this new legislation is having, but the Government is committed to monitoring the effectiveness of these new powers.

A different approach has been adopted in Northern Ireland compared to that adopted in England and Wales. Northern Ireland does not have specific racial, religious, homophobic or disability aggravated offences. Rather the approach adopted in Northern Ireland allows the court to aggravate a sentence where hostility has been established and will give sentencers greater flexibility in sentencing.

The NIAC’s final report contains further welcome observations, comments and recommendations. The Committee correctly recognises the necessity and complexity of dealing with both the cause and effect of hate crime. It recognised the persistent nature of sectarianism and the more recent, and equally abhorrent, crimes against people from a minority ethnic background, against those who are perceived as having a different sexual orientation and against those with a disability.

The Government also welcomes the Committee’s acknowledgement of what has been achieved to date, such as initiatives taken by the Department for Social Development and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, as well as awareness training on hate crime for staff within various Criminal Justice agencies.

Government has frequently put on record its abhorrence of all forms of intolerance and is committed to eradicating all manifestations of hatred which stem from intolerance, whether motivated by racism, sectarianism, homophobia, hatred of people with disabilities or based on any other form of intolerance.

The latest Police Service of Northern Ireland statistics for hate incidents show a 79.5% rise in the number of racially motivated incidents and 176.1% rise in the number of homophobic incidents reported to police during 2004/2005.

In recent times the pernicious spectre of homophobia and hatred of people with disabilities has reared its ugly head across Northern Ireland. We are seeing more visible and frequent incidents involving physical attacks and intimidation of gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people as well as on people with disabilities. These particular manifestations of intolerance have always been present in our society, however as we move inexorably towards a society where overt sectarian conflict is dramatically decreasing, it would appear that many individuals, who previous were protagonists in that conflict, now seem intent on venting their intolerance on vulnerable people from minority communities.

The recent statistics show a particularly dramatic increase in reported incidents of attack and intimidation on people who are perceived as gay, lesbian, transgender or bi-sexual. This dramatic rise in reported incidents is a combination of an actual increase in such incidents, which are becoming more common and brutal, alongside an increased confidence within these communities to come forward and report such attacks and incidents to the police. Government departments, agencies and the police service will continue to work closely with individuals, community and voluntary groups and organisations representative of these communities to increase further their confidence in the criminal justice system. We need to ensure that all incidents of attack and intimidation are recorded, monitored and investigated thoroughly with a view to maximising the number of successful prosecutions.

We will also work very closely with individuals, community groups and representative organisations of people with disabilities to build confidence within this community so that the reporting and recording of incidents is maximised.

Actions to build relationships and confidence between government, the police service and the gay, lesbian and bi-sexual communities, and people with disabilities, will be included within Government's Strategic Action Plan on sexual orientation and addressed within the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on disability, to ensure that all incidents against people from these communities are reported and investigated thoroughly, and ultimately to reduce and prevent such incidents occurring. People who are gay, lesbian, transgender, bi-sexual or who have a disability should be in absolutely no doubt that Government will deploy the same effort and resources into preventing, and dealing with, attacks and intimidation on them, or on their property. In tackling hate crime and intolerance in Northern Ireland there will be no hierarchy of

intolerance to be addressed, there is no such thing as an “acceptable prejudice”. All manifestations of intolerance into hate crime will be tackled robustly, with equal priority.

Effectively tackling these issues, very often long standing and complex, around racism, sectarianism, homophobia, hatred of people with disabilities and other forms of intolerance requires a focused, sustained and co-ordinated range of short, medium and long-term actions. These actions must involve everyone with a stake in transforming Northern Ireland into a normal, civil, integrated and multi-cultural society. We welcome the Committee’s view that hate crime will not be dispelled overnight, and that the fundamental responsibility for creating a decent society rests not only with the Government and the courts, but also, and crucially, with individuals in their day to day lives.

Government is strongly committed to meeting the scale of the challenge laid out in the report by the Committee. Its task is to lead on a concerted and co-ordinated effort to eradicate all manifestations of hatred and intolerance; to create a truly shared society, defined by a culture of tolerance.

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. This vision will be founded on partnership, equality and mutual respect as a basis of good relationships.

Relationship building is important and vital, but we must also consolidate this with practical action. The Good Relations policy and strategic framework which the Government published on 21 March 2005, coupled with Northern Ireland’s Racial Equality Strategy, which will be published before the summer recess, will outline practical steps and actions, based on fundamental principles, that will be taken forward.

The Good Relations Triennial Action Plan, coupled with the Racial Equality Strategy will provide the mechanism whereby the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) will lead and co-ordinate action across departments and agencies to tackle racial and sectarian intimidation. In parallel, OFMDFM will also lead coordinated effort to tackle homophobia and hatred of people with disabilities through the Strategic Action Plan on sexual orientation and the PSI Working Group on disability.

While Government will lead and co-ordinate actions flowing from these mutually compatible and complementary policies, it will be incumbent on elected representatives, each individual along with the various sectors and organisations in Northern Ireland to play their part to promote a shared Northern Ireland.

It is important to recognise, and to draw into those actions, the very positive work undertaken right across Northern Ireland aimed at improving relationships, particularly in workplaces. There are many good examples of relationship building led by voluntary groups and organisations, 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 these very practical foundations of relationship building. The actions arising from the Good Relations policy, Racial Equality strategy, Strategic Action Plan on sexual orientation and PSI Working Group on disability, will build upon and utilise the resource that is the reservoir of relationships, expertise, knowledge and commitment developed over years within all of these sectors.

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 Good Relations Policy and Strategic Framework along with the Racial Equality Strategy will provide robust and comprehensive mechanisms through which departments can more effectively mainstream good relations and racial equality considerations into policy development.

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 public expressions of hatred, threats and stereotyping.

The Good Relations Policy and Strategic Framework, with its vision of a shared and inclusive society, is not an aspiration or a pipe dream.

Government is committed to moving towards the establishment of a society in which all individuals are considered as equals, where differences are resolved through dialogue, and where all people are treated impartially. A society where there is equality, respect for diversity and recognition of our interdependence. It has to be a shared future for everyone.

Over recent years the economic performance of Northern Ireland has shown significant improvement. With increasing economic progress we have seen the workforce change, becoming more diverse and drawing in much needed skills and workers to support important public services and local companies. Northern Ireland is also increasingly seen as a place that people wish to come to not only to work, but to visit, study and settle in. These workers, visitors and newcomers have in some instances been subjected to racially motivated intimidation and violence. This behaviour and treatment of guests in our country is absolutely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Vulnerable groups and individuals will be protected from those who cannot accept their responsibilities to

society and who persist in abusive and violent behaviour. The new hate crime legislation will be robustly enforced.

Northern Ireland society has been, and continues to be transformed, politically, socially and economically. The pace of this change and the momentum for it will continue to accelerate.

Creating a sustainable modern, competitive, dynamic economy that can provide real opportunities for all of Northern Ireland's citizens and communities is intricately linked to the creation of a successful peaceful, integrated society that recognises and celebrates the strength in its diversity, and where equality and respect for human rights are clearly manifest and where the human and capital resources necessary to sustain economic progress can be both cultivated within and attracted here from elsewhere in the world, so that the fruits of economic success are dispersed to as broad a cross-section of the community as possible creating opportunity for all and participation by all.

Hate crime and intolerance, if left unchecked, has the potential to stymie this progress and keep this society stuck in the past, a past of sectarian division, high unemployment and economic underachievement. A past in which Northern Ireland inspired sympathy, not respect, in the eyes of the world.

That world continues to change and become relatively smaller, and in this new global context, in this new world, there is no place for fraternal strife, hate or intolerance, no second chances if we take our eye off the ball. That is why we must all work together to ensure that there is absolutely no place for sectarianism, racism, homophobia or any other manifestation of intolerance in Northern Ireland society.

Equality and the protection of minorities and vulnerable people is also, ultimately, a condition for prosperity. Investors are sensitive now as never before to the political and social context of their operations. They are wary as never before of locations where they feel uncomfortable, not only about the safety of their operations, but also about the quality of life the society has to offer. In a world where ethical and legal issues can make or break even the most powerful corporations, they do not want to be exposed to practices or structures they cannot defend.

Legislation, such as fair employment, was introduced into Northern Ireland, in part, in recognition of that fact, and now we have responded to the need to introduce additional law to deal with the emergence of hate crime in recent years. Such legislation is now better understood across the board as offering a protection open, neutrally, to all and offering a legal protection against behaviours which are incompatible with a multi-cultural, inclusive and tolerant society.

Enforcement action by the Police Service of Northern Ireland will continue to be the key primary instrument in tackling hate crime. But Government is also strongly committed to tackling both cause and effect.

The underlying issues, socio-economic, labour market forces, health, housing, education, myths and misconceptions will all also be addressed in a focused and co-ordinated way with clearly defined actions, outcomes and success indicators. This work will be an important part of the Racial Equality Strategy. The Northern Ireland Racial Equality Forum has played an important role in helping shape the new strategy and will play a major role in ensuring its effective implementation.

OFMDFM will take the lead in a partnership with the NIO and PSNI to ensure that there is a sustained focus on combating racism, sectarianism and other hate crime. This will include a media campaign and education programme. It will also ensure that this message is centrally incorporated in the roll out of policy initiatives covering, good relations, racial equality, gender equality, sexual orientation, disability, community safety, neighbourhood renewal and victim support.

Providing a rapid response to racist attacks and incidents as well as ensuring the accurate and comprehensive recording and monitoring of hate crime will also be a key focus within this arrangement.

Finally, the Government is in no doubt about the scale of the challenge - for it and for the wider civil society in Northern Ireland. It is committed to tackling the problem of hate crime in visible, co-ordinated and more coherent ways: ways that provide confidence within communities throughout Northern Ireland. Others must also play a role. It requires leadership at political, civic and community leadership. We need to go beyond condemnation. That will require resolute action at all levels.

Annex

Conclusions and Recommendations

We have no illusions that hate crime will be dispelled overnight. However, if Northern Ireland is to establish a fully normal society these despicable and brutal attacks must cease. It is up to the Government, the churches, the institutions of civil society, and every single individual in their daily lives, to take collective responsibility for ensuring that these appalling activities are eradicated by all means possible. (Paragraph 6)

Noted, and addressed in government response paper.

We are pleased to note a clear intention on the part of the PSNI and the Northern Ireland Policing Board to take account of increasing racial and homophobic attacks. We welcome the continuing targets contained in the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Police Service of Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2005-2008 to monitor the number of racist and homophobic crimes and incidents. (Paragraph 11)

Noted, and addressed in government response paper.

Nothing could illustrate the dysfunction of Northern Ireland society better than the absence, until recently, of an agreed, official definition of sectarian hate crime. The process of social normalisation, marked by the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in 1998, has enabled society to begin slowly to get to grips with a number of problems which were set aside over the past decades by the overwhelming concentration on the armed conflict. In many respects Northern Ireland's institutions are now having to relearn their basic functions as society returns, slowly and painfully, to normal. It is good news that, at long last, the PSNI has established a definition for sectarian hate crime as an essential basis for the proactive policing of these unacceptable activities. (Paragraph 14)

Noted.

It is high time that the police and criminal justice system in Northern Ireland took with the utmost seriousness crimes against the most vulnerable in our society. Many attacks on people with disabilities appear to be rooted in the perception of the attacker that the victim's disability indicates some essential difference which provides a licence to discriminate. This is an utterly false perception which must be challenged head-on. We are pleased that the Government has accepted our advice to take legislative steps to label such actions for what they are, hate crimes, and to make available to the courts appropriate sentencing powers. (Paragraph 19)

Noted, and addressed in government response paper.

The fundamental responsibility for creating a decent society rests not only with the Government and the courts but also, and crucially, with individuals in their day to day lives. We hope that the normalisation of society in Northern Ireland which is taking place gradually will manifest itself at individual level in the reduction and disappearance of actions by misguided individuals which make the already challenging lives of those with disabilities infinitely more trying and stressful. (Paragraph 20)

Noted, and addressed in government response paper.

There appears to be general agreement that hate crime in Northern Ireland is on the increase, and is subject to significant under-reporting. (Paragraph 22)

Under reporting of hate related incidents is recognised as a significant issue. The number of hate incidents reported to police continues to rise and it is believed that this is, in part, due to a greater confidence within minority communities and a direct result of the considerable efforts in recent years of the Police Service to engage with minority groups and communities.

The Police Service continues to develop and explore further opportunities to maximise the reporting of incidents. The introduction of on-line reporting through the PSNI website provides a further opportunity for victims to report incidents and this can be done anonymously. This further complements existing reporting mechanisms such as Crimestoppers and third party reporting through a number of LGBT groups. The Police Service is also a member of the NIO multi agency hate incident reporting project.

The Government considers that “enforcement action by the Police Service of Northern Ireland will continue to be the key to tackling hate crime”. We agree that, while by no means the sole response called for, police activity will be a crucial factor in bearing down on hate crime offences. It is essential that the PSNI gives this form of crime a high priority and its success will be judged ultimately by the number of successful prosecutions. (Paragraph 23)

Noted, and addressed in government response paper.

The figures supplied by the PSNI indicate a disturbingly low clearance rate for racial and homophobic incidents relative to other similar crimes. In both categories, less than 7% of incidents recorded as crimes by the police resulted in a charge or summons, including complainants who declined to prosecute. It is good that the PSNI and the Policing Board have set targets in the recent policing plan (2005-2008) to increase the clearance rate for racist and homophobic crimes and to establish a baseline clearance rate for crimes motivated by sectarianism and crimes against persons with a disability. However, putting these measures in place is only a start,

and the PSNI must now do everything possible to demonstrate a commitment to improve the clearance rate for homophobic and racist crimes. The Policing Board must monitor the PSNI's performance closely. (Paragraph 30)

During 2004/2005 the Police Service cleared 15.9% of all racially motivated crimes and 22.5% of all homophobic crimes. The detection rate in respect of racially motivated crime fell by 1% whilst the clearance rate for homophobic crimes rose by 4.7%. The Police Service will continue to maximise its efforts to increase these clearance rates and recognise this as being a crucial confidence issue within minority groups.

Whilst the clearance rates are low the Police Service have during 2004/2005 charged, summoned or cautioned (sanctioned clearances) a greater percentage of perpetrators compared with 2003/2004. Sanctioned detections for racially motivated crime increased by 2.4% and homophobic by 6.5%

The 2005-2008 Annual Policing Plan contains two targets relevant to this recommendation;

Target 4.9.1 "To increase the clearance rate for racist/homophobic crimes"

Target 4.9.2 "To establish a baseline clearance rate for religious and sectarian motivated crimes and crimes against persons with a disability".

The NI Policing Board will monitor PSNI performance against these targets and all other Annual Policing Plan targets quarterly at a meeting in public of the full Board. The Policing Board will also publish an assessment of PSNI performance against these targets for the 2005/06 year in the NIPB Annual Report in June 2006.

We are greatly concerned about the very low level of confidence which members of the LGBT and most minority ethnic communities have in the PSNI. While we recognise the steps taken by the police to develop more effective relationships with them, both communities expressed deep concerns about the extent to which the PSNI are taking hate crime attacks seriously. Much more needs to be done by the PSNI to increase the confidence of the communities and to build more effective relationships with them. This will require great patience and commitment, and progress is likely to be gradual, but we expect the PSNI to take the lead decisively to effect discernable, positive changes. The Government must ensure that adequate resources are made available to the PSNI for this purpose. (Paragraph 38)

The Police Service of Northern Ireland fully recognise the importance of continuing to build trust and confidence with minority communities. The substantial increase in reports to police is evidence of a growing confidence in the Police Service on the part of minority communities. A considerable number of reported incidents relate to non-crimes which traditionally the Police Service did not receive and this is believed to be a direct result of the established relationships, recognised commitment and publicity

campaigns such as the recent 'Hate Crime is Wrong', during January and February 2005.

The Police Service is very aware of the seriousness of many attacks, the impact on victims and the wider implications for minority communities. The increasing diversity within Northern Ireland has created a greater risk of hate related incidents and the Police Service will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that incidents are prevented or, when they do occur, are responded to appropriately, and that victims receive a positive and effective response.

The Police Service is presently consulting, internally and externally, on the new Service Hate Crime policy. This policy aims to ensure that all hate related incidents are identified, recorded and investigated in an appropriate manner and that victims are supported accordingly. Training and effective supervision of all investigations will be essential to ensure that this policy document becomes a reality for victims of hate incidents.

The Police Service will continue to work in partnership with Government, voluntary and statutory agencies to ensure that it responds effectively and appropriately to hate related incidents.

We welcome the steps taken by the PSNI to improve its training strategy to take account of the growing problem of hate crime in Northern Ireland. However, in order to ensure it has a fully responsive strategy, the PSNI must take advice from key representative organisations which provide support to the victims of hate crime. The police need to ensure that their existing training programmes are implemented throughout the organisation, and that representatives of the minority ethnic and LGBT populations are actively involved in providing that training. It must ensure that the revised hate crime policy is comprehensive and takes into account the increase in the scale and diversity of the minority ethnic and the LGBT population across all parts of Northern Ireland. (Paragraph 42)

Consistent and effective training is essential to ensure that every member of the Police Service can respond appropriately to hate incidents and their victims. The Service has for a number of years used individuals from within minority ethnic, LGBT and disability groups and support organisations to deliver and develop training at the Police College and within local Districts.

The Police Service recently established an internal Diversity Unit to develop policy and guidance on Diversity matters and secured EU funding for a joint PSNI / An Garda Síochána Diversity Training pack. This pack is being developed in partnership with members of minority representative groups in the North and South. Assistant Chief Constable Judith Gillespie, Criminal Justice Department, has recently been appointed as the ACPO lead on Hate Crime. An internal evaluation of related training will be conducted to identify gaps or areas of inconsistency.

The Police Service Disability and Minority Ethnic Independent Advisory Groups and the Belfast LGBT Forum have provided an additional opportunity to develop training and advise policy development.

As we have said, the responsibility for combating these crimes is the equal responsibility of each police officer in Northern Ireland. It is vital that the policing of minorities is not itself 'ghettoised' by being seen within the police service as the exclusive preserve of Minority Liaison Officers. Rather, the MLOs must be trained as the leaders of police locally in combating these crimes. (Paragraph 43)

The responsibility for investigating hate related incidents is undertaken by front line officers or Detectives in appropriate cases. The Minority Liaison Officer's role is to provide additional support to victims and to proactively engage with minority groups within the District. Minority Liaison Officers receive additional training to enable them to provide advice to investigating police.

Whilst the Minority Liaison Officer has a specific role in respect of hate related incidents, it is the duty of every police officer to ensure that Service policy is implemented and that all victims receive the appropriate support and assistance. Article 2 of the PSNI Code of Ethics states that 'Police Officers shall treat all victims of crime and disorder with sensitivity and respect for dignity. Police officers shall consider any special needs, vulnerabilities and concerns victims may have'. Breach of the Code of Ethics is a disciplinary offence.

It is crucial that the PSNI is more representative of all communities in Northern Ireland. We believe that this will help increase the confidence which the communities have in the PSNI and will increase the effectiveness of the PSNI in dealing with hate crime. We recommend that the PSNI and the Northern Ireland Policing Board take the necessary steps to secure higher levels of recruitment from the minority ethnic communities to the PSNI as a matter of priority. (Paragraph 46)

There have been seven completed recruitment campaigns conducted since the inception of the Police Service of Northern Ireland in November 2001. During these campaigns 411 minority ethnic applicants applied with 45 being screened out at the initial stage. Of the remaining 366, 21 successfully completed the recruiting process, which resulted in 4 appointments. The Police Service has commissioned independent research into the views and attitudes of potential applicants from minority ethnic groups. This research will take the form of focus groups with individuals drawn from these particular backgrounds.

The NI Census indicates that 0.85% of the population are from a minority ethnic background and applicants from these groups who apply in percentage terms of the available labour market, actually exceed those from the white population on each of the recruitment campaigns. However it must be recognised that the numbers to date are

small and any increase or decrease in recruitment could have an impact on the percentage of applicants.

In addition to extensive advertisement, school visits, web-site, information and community events, the Police Service also engage with 59 minority ethnic community groups by providing information packs and posters during each of the recruiting campaigns. Work is also ongoing to identify and remove potential obstacles during the selection process for minority ethnic applicants.

The legislation set out in Section 46 (50:50) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 has not had a major impact on the numbers recruited from a minority ethnic background.

We welcome the steps taken to establish support associations within the PSNI for ethnic minority officers and members of the LGBT community, and expect the PSNI to demonstrate full support for them. (Paragraph 47)

The Police Service has awarded a development grant to each of the support associations and has provided office accommodation within the Police College. The establishing members have been provided with facilitator's time to further develop the associations. A formal launch of the two associations is planned for later this year.

It is deeply worrying that many minority communities do not have full confidence in the police, particularly against the background of increased incidence of hate crime. This situation must be changed rapidly. Better reporting systems, the police hate crime policy, and the introduction of performance targets in the Policing Plan, offer a good opportunity to measure the extent of hate crime and to monitor the performance of the police, but these measures are only a beginning. The PSNI must set itself to work closely with other statutory agencies and victim support groups to improve general confidence in the reporting system, address reasons for underreporting and unwillingness to prosecute, to demonstrate the commitment of every police officer to protect vulnerable groups. (Paragraph 48)

The Police Service has sought to make itself as accessible to minority groups as possible and recognise that many victims will not wish to go directly to police. The Police Service recently introduced (January 2005) on-line reporting through the Service website – www.psni.police.uk This was introduced during the recent 'Hate Crime is Wrong' campaign, which aimed to encourage victims and witnesses to come forward to police.

Third party reporting is available through a number of representative organisations and it is hoped that this can be further developed along with the multi agency reporting system presently being developed. Many key statutory agencies and minority victim support groups are involved in the development of this project.

Whilst the Police Service would seek to encourage victims to provide sufficient details to support an investigation if these are not forthcoming the matter will still be recorded and will assist in identifying and preventing further incidents.

The Police Service remains determined to fully investigate all hate related incidents and where possible secure sufficient evidence to prosecute offenders. The new Service policy (subject to consultation) proposes that all hate related investigations are supervised from the outset and that every investigation will be reviewed by a senior officer after 28 days and the victim updated of any progress.

A performance target has been agreed with the Northern Ireland Policing Board in respect of increasing detection rates for crimes of a racial and homophobic nature. Progress against this target is monitored at the Policing Board's public meetings between the Chief Constable and the Board.

Targets have also been agreed in relation to the establishment of a baseline clearance rate for disability, religion and sectarian motivated crimes.

We welcome acceptance by the Policing Board that hate crime is a growing problem. We expect the Board's hate crime research projects on policing and the minority ethnic and LGBT population to make recommendations to the Chief Constable that will improve the reporting of all types of hate crime and increase the confidence which minority communities have in the policing authorities overall. (Paragraph 51)

This recommendation refers to research which has been jointly commissioned by the NI Policing Board and the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland into the views of Minority Ethnic and Lesbian, Gay and Bi-Sexual communities on the new policing arrangements. The research is well under way with publication of the final research reports expected in the Autumn 2005. Both research projects are being overseen by Steering Groups on which the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (Patrick Yu) and the Coalition On Sexual Orientation (James Knox) are represented.

While we were disappointed by the initial lack of response by some criminal justice agencies in Northern Ireland to our inquiry, our probing has demonstrated that the agencies appear to be aware of the problem and are taking some action to make their staff aware of it and to provide training. These are initial steps only and the agencies need to sustain a robust and coordinated approach in order to keep awareness of their staff high. We recommend that the NIO takes the lead in ensuring that all the training provided is founded on common principles; that there is collaboration between the agencies in delivering training; and, in particular, that this is developed in conjunction with the representative bodies of the minority communities. (Paragraph 55)

Government welcomes the acknowledgment of the Committee that awareness raising of racial issues in general and hate crime in particular has taken place and that specific training has been provided within various criminal justice agencies. While each agency must be free to develop its own training package to suit the needs and requirements of its own staff, taking into account their level of contact with the public, we agree there is a need to ensure this is delivered in a consistent way. Given this, the Government will refer this matter to the Criminal Justice Board who will set in place systems to monitor this.

Using ‘restorative justice’ as a means of dealing with the perpetrators of hate crime offers a number of potential benefits. We were told that it helps to educate perpetrators, repair relationships with victims, and offers a more constructive approach to dealing with hate crime. The PSNI employ ‘restorative cautioning’ for youth offending, and we recommend that the PSNI and other criminal justice agencies explore the full potential for developing a programme of ‘restorative cautioning’ for use in dealing with the perpetrators of hate crimes. (Paragraph 57)

The Police Service recently introduced an Adult Diversion Scheme. This scheme provides the opportunity to deliver any informed warning to an adult restoratively, as is the case presently with all juvenile offenders. The new Hate Crime policy proposes that all informed warnings for hate related incidents will be delivered in this manner.

Criminal Justice agencies have recently completed a set of draft guidelines on the operation of restorative justice in the community intended to establish a working relationship between community restorative justice schemes and the criminal justice system. The guidelines have been issued to community restorative justice schemes for consultation.

Minority groups, and particularly victims, must play their part: they must be encouraged to come forward and report crimes against them. We appreciate fully how difficult it can be to report such attacks. Victims may be fearful of the authorities and “authority” in general, as a result of experiences in their country of origin. They may not speak English (and we heard from victims in this category), or may have language skills they feel are inadequate. They may consider that, on the basis of past experience, no action will be taken, however much they press for attention. They may be fearful that they do not have the sympathy of neighbours. They may be in the UK without official permission. (Paragraph 58)

Noted.

It remains the case, however, that without victims’ reports, the police and the authorities can do little or nothing. Worse still, the impression may persist that there is simply no problem to address, or the problem is a minor one. This plays into the hands of the perpetrators, encourages them in the belief that they can commit these crimes with impunity, and stokes the flames of prejudice and intra-community

frustration. We expect the minority communities to record and report attacks on them and their members and instances of abuse as a matter of priority. We had evidence that some groups were taking action on reporting, and this is heartening. All groups must follow his lead. They must use the law proactively, and take every opportunity to hold the police and authorities generally, and their own elected representatives, to account in investigating incidents, tracking down the perpetrators, and obliterating this crime from Northern Ireland society. (Paragraph 59)

Noted.

Responsibility in Government for tackling hate crime currently straddles the NIO and the OFMDFM. It is of vital importance that this split between departments does not impair the Government's ability to respond to the challenges presented by hate crime in a unified and focused way. The involvement of many voluntary groups such as the Northern Ireland Victim Support, an organisation which receives core funding from the NIO to deliver services to victims of crime, adds to the complexity of the position, and increases the potential for a disjointed policy response. We look to the Government to demonstrate that these dangers are being avoided, and that the administration is working as one in tackling this problem. (Paragraph 64)

Noted, and addressed in government response paper.

We are concerned by the failure of OFMDFM to produce strategies which have a direct bearing on hate crime to agreed timetables. While the recent publication in March 2005 of A Shared Future, which sets out the Government's policy and strategic framework for good relations is a first step, there remain other important policy and strategy documents which appear stuck in the pipe-line, for example, the racial equality strategy for Northern Ireland. We have no reason to suppose that this relative failure indicates a lack of determination by the Minister and officials to address head-on the increasing problem of hate crime in Northern Ireland, but these Government strategies are required as a matter of urgency, and some are badly overdue. All outstanding strategies must be published without delay: it is important to the credibility of the Government that, when a deadline is set by it for the publication of such documents, that deadline should be adhered to. (Paragraph 76)

The Racial Equality strategy for Northern Ireland was published in July 2005. The complex nature of cross-departmental coordination has had an impact on progressing from the public consultation to publication of the strategy, as has the need to take account of, and ensure compatibility with, the change in overall direction of UK policy development which has seen the proposed National Action Plan Against Racism now being incorporated with the Home Office Community Cohesion and Racial Equality strategy. It was considered that taking a little more time to "get it right" would have the potential to produce more substantial and positives outcomes. Following the close of the public consultation on a draft race strategy the issue of migrant workers in Northern

Ireland came very much more to the fore and again this was considered such an important issue that some time was needed to consult with stakeholders and the Northern Ireland Racial Equality Forum on this issue to ensure that racial equality issues in respect of migrant workers are covered within the Racial Equality strategy.

The Gender Equality Unit within OFMDFM in association with representatives of LGB people and other key stakeholders, is currently developing a coordinated Strategic Sexual Orientation Action Plan to identify and tackle issues and inequalities based on sexual orientation. This Action Plan is to bring a specific focus on issues experienced by gay, lesbian and bisexual people. Where an inequality or disadvantage is explained mainly in terms of a person's sexual orientation then it is to be expected that the action to tackle that inequality will be included under this action plan on sexual orientation issues and complemented, where appropriate, by action under other strategies.

It will include current and future actions by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Department of Education and the Community Safety Unit of the NIO to tackle homophobic violence and issues arising from it. Monitoring and review arrangements will be included. It will be issued for consultation in July 2005.

The formal consultation process on the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland was completed at the end of February 2005. The Gender Equality Unit is currently considering the responses and will publish a summary of these responses in August 2005. The finalised strategy will be published in December 2005. The strategy builds upon the Northern Ireland departments' mainstreaming activities under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and provides a framework for the use of positive action measures to systematically tackle gender inequalities.

Key action areas identified in the strategy include crime and community safety and gender related violence and abuse. The action plan currently being developed will provide an agreed set of objectives and targets to chart progress in promoting gender equality and tackle gender inequalities across all government departments' policies and practices in these key action areas.

Reporting and monitoring mechanisms under the action plan will bring together the departments' activities to give a wide picture of what they are doing to tackle gender inequality.

Work on developing a strategy to promote greater social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities, is on schedule for completion in 2006. This work involves a major survey of people with disabilities in Northern Ireland to be carried out in 2005. This research will offer an assessment of the experience of the victimisation of people with disabilities.

The view of the Committee in relation to the role of district councils is noted and Gender Equality Unit will liaise with the Community Relations Unit to help identify inputs to the Action Plan.

We recommend that, once in place, the strategies are assessed objectively, and the results published regularly. This will promote transparency, ensure accountability, and inspire confidence in the groups most vulnerable to hate crime. (Paragraph 77)

Noted.

There must be no doubt about what we have found: the absence of a strongly promoted “vision” for community relations in Northern Ireland: an unacceptable slowness in policy development: and little evidence that policies are delivering real, “on the ground”, improvements to the lives of vulnerable individuals, all of which is resulting in dissatisfaction amongst these groups and a deteriorating pattern of inter-community relations. We are concerned that, despite officials’ reassuring words, present arrangements between OFMDFM and the NIO may be insufficiently coordinated to act speedily in producing effective strategies to combat hate crime. The Government must consider what improvements are required to correct this unsatisfactory state of affairs. (Paragraph 78)

The Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland’, was launched on 21 March 2005. It sets out the Government’s vision for the future of Northern Ireland, that 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.”

A Shared Future outlines the fundamental principles and aims which underpin how all of us, government, local authorities, civil society, can work together to bring about the best shared future between and within communities.

A future shared between and within the communities of Northern Ireland (both old and new) is a reality.

The policy outlines how the illustrative practical steps and actions, based on common fundamental principles, can be co-ordinated across government and throughout civil 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 on Good Relations due to be published in Autumn 2005.

Government, as stated, is persuaded that only a focused and co-ordinated approach to tackling hate crime and its related issues has the potential to produce effective actions and outcomes which will eliminate the scourge of intolerance from Northern Ireland society. OFMDFM will take the lead in a partnership with the NIO to ensure that a

sustained focus on combating racism and tackling the effects and causes of hate crime in Northern Ireland is centrally incorporated within the roll out of government policy initiatives covering, Good Relations, Racial Equality, Gender Equality, Sexual Orientation, PSI Working Group on disability, Community Safety, Neighbourhood Renewal, Victim Support.

Education is a most important area for action in the field of community relations generally and, in particular, a means of combating the underlying causes of hate crime. In its day to day activity, the Department of Education needs to keep firmly in mind the vision set out in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement that ‘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. (Paragraph 85)

The Government and the Department of Education take the statutory duties placed upon them in relation to integrated education seriously. In addition to the vision set out in the Belfast agreement, since 1990 the Education Reform Order has placed a statutory duty on the Department to “encourage and facilitate” the development of integrated education. Under this legislation, new integrated schools qualify for grants immediately provided they meet the minimum viability criteria, which, following review and reduction for primary schools in December 2000, are as follows: 15-pupil intake for new primary schools in Belfast and Londonderry, 12-pupil intake elsewhere; 50-pupil intake for post primary schools, together with other specified criteria. In addition, procedures are in place for transforming existing schools to integrated status and these may be initiated directly by parents.

We are pleased to see important initiatives like the Local and Global Citizenship which offers a real opportunity to embed tolerance and understanding in the teaching and learning of young people. But we are under no illusions that initiating such projects equates to a successful outcome. The Department must ensure that this good start is followed through vigorously, and that the project is monitored regularly to assess its contribution to the attitudes and behaviour of young people to hate crime. (Paragraph 86)

To complement the Local and Global Citizenship curriculum within the classroom, the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) agreed to the Department’s request to have the term ‘community relations’ included in the curriculum at Key Stage 3. Under Key Concept – Diversity and Inclusion, young people should have opportunities to, among other things, ‘Investigate ways of managing conflict and promoting community relations and reconciliation.’ Also, ‘Investigate the opportunities arising from diversity and multiculturalism and possible ways of promoting inclusion, for example, community relations work, shared festivals and sporting events, integrated education etc’.

Schools which choose to explore any of these areas on a cross community basis with a partner school should be able to access funding through the Schools Community Relations Programme (SCRCP).

From September 2006 Local and Global Citizenship will be included at the core of the Northern Ireland curriculum and will be compulsory for all Post-Primary pupils. It has been piloted for several years now and all Post-Primary schools will have teachers involved in specific training by September 2005.

After 2006 the teaching and learning outcomes of Local and Global citizenship may be assessed and reported on by Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), as part of their formal programmed of inspections. The Department of Education together with CCEA will continue to support teachers in promoting the key principles of tolerance, equality and inclusion.

While it is difficult to quantify the direct impact of Local and Global Citizenship on the attitudes of young people, it may be possible to draw out some general trends from the Young Peoples' Behavior and Attitudes survey carried out by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

The issue of integrated education, which should be in the front rank for Departmental activity, appears to be given less priority than it merits. We were struck by the evidence that, while sixty per cent of people in Northern Ireland would prefer to send their children to a mixed religion school, only five per cent can do so currently. There may be many people who would not wish to send their children to an integrated school. We respect their right not to do so. However, the evidence is that very many more wish to than there are currently places in school to accommodate them. There is also evidence that integrated education can help to heal sectarian wounds. We expect the Government to look with renewed urgency at this issue, in particular, at how those who wish take up integrated education for their sons and daughters may do so without undue delay. (Paragraph 87)

The Government does not seek to impose any particular type of education rather the Department of Education responds to parental demand. It funds integrated schools that are robust, do not involve unreasonable public expenditure and meet the specified criteria.

There are at present 55 grant-aided integrated schools in Northern Ireland (with a total enrolment of around 16,700 pupils – around 5% of total pupils), made up of 37 grant-maintained integrated schools (GMI) and 18 controlled integrated schools.

The Department also attaches conditions on religious balance to new integrated schools. New GMI schools are required to have a minimum of 30% of their enrolment drawn from the relevant minority (Roman Catholic or Protestant) tradition. Existing schools which have transformed to integrated status must attract 10% of their first year intake

from whichever is the minority community before final approval is granted. These schools are then required to demonstrate reasonable prospects of achieving, over the longer term, a minimum of 30% of their enrolment drawn from the relevant minority community.

The policy of open enrolment, as applied to all schools, enables parents to state their preferences for the schools they wish their children to attend. Schools admit pupils up to their approved admissions and enrolment numbers, which are set by the Department based on the physical capacity of their accommodation or in line with the agreed long term enrolment.

The total number of places available in the integrated sector in the 2005/06 school year for Year 1 pupils is 1,179 and 1,920 for Year 8 pupils. Information on applications for 2005/06 is not yet available.

However, in 2004/05 the total number of children who expressed a desire to attend an integrated post-primary school was 2252. Of these, 1960 were first preference applications and the remaining 292 were subsequent preference applications. The total number of pupils admitted to these schools was 1808 although there were 1955 Year 8 places available in integrated schools throughout Northern Ireland. In total 444 pupils who applied to an integrated school did not receive a place (368 first preference applications and 76 subsequent applications).

The pattern of admissions varies across Northern Ireland with some integrated schools oversubscribed in relation to their physical capacity. As with all popular schools, regardless of type, it is not possible to provide places for all children who wish to attend. Some integrated schools have unfilled places. In 2004/05 12 out of the 19 post primary schools were undersubscribed with first preference applications.

Underpinning all formal education is the crucial role of parents in demonstrating to their children the great social advantages of tolerance and respect for those with different backgrounds and cultures. Parents should be made aware of research by the education authorities which suggests that attitudes may be formed at a particularly early age, and we look to the Department of Education to take the lead in making this information widely available. (Paragraph 88)

The Department, in conjunction with the education and library boards, is developing a website to support the Schools Community Relations Programme. While it is still being developed, it is intended to provide links to anything relevant to the Programme and this should include relevant areas of research. The Department will be notifying all schools about the site and to how to access it. Research by Paul Connolly and Julie Healey "Children and the Conflict in Northern Ireland: The experiences and Perspectives of 3-11 Year Olds is available on the OFMDFM website and can be found at <http://www.research.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/childrenandconflict.pdf>

We welcome the evidence provided by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive of a desire on the part of many people to live in non segregated communities and trust that the Executive will do everything possible to encourage this development while respecting reasonable personal choice. We are impressed by the way in which the Housing Executive and the Department for Social development is adapting its long experience of dealing with sectarian hate crime in housing to other forms of hate crime. We commend this work, and would like to see these measures accelerated and extended, particularly their pilot projects for integrated estates. (Paragraph 93)

The Housing Executive has a duty to ensure housing is provided on the basis of need. However there is no doubt that community division and segregation exerts a high price which, in housing terms, prevents the best use being made of existing housing and land and limits the choice for those people who wish to live in mixed areas. If housing need is to be met in all its forms, progress must be made in providing choices for all who need to live in affordable social housing. In this context the promotion of good relations is a key Housing Executive objective which will help in providing this choice.

With a wealth of experience at local level the Housing Executive published its first community relations strategy in March 2004. In doing so it made an explicit commitment in its 2004/2005 Corporate and Business Plan to promote good relations. Among the Housing Executive's aims is a commitment to promote mixed housing where it is practicable, desirable and safe.

The Housing Executive, as do all public bodies, has a statutory duty in terms of Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It can play a key role in promoting community relations and community cohesion which will allow the identification and successful implementation of mixed community housing areas.

To help ensure the success of these areas the Housing Executive's strategic objective to promote good relations is linked to the following aims:

- Responding quickly and effectively to the needs of people in danger as a result of community conflict.
- Working in partnership with others to address the complex housing needs of a divided society.
- Respecting the rights of people who choose to live in single identity neighbourhoods.
- Facilitating and encouraging mixed housing as far as this is practicable, desirable and safe.

The Housing Executive's approach to delivering its good relations strategy is set within five themes:

- 1) Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols
- 2) Residential segregation/Integration
- 3) Race Relations
- 4) Interface Areas
- 5) Communities in Transition.

Community cohesion depends ultimately on trust and safety. While the delivery of this is beyond the remit of a single agency, the Housing Executive will continue to make its contribution through its policies, partnerships, investment and resource allocation to speed up the pace of change.

In addition the Housing Executive and Queen's University have started a unique survey of 600 households in a specific area to identify what it takes to maintain and develop mixed communities. The area chosen is an excellent example of a stable, mixed community and this work will help understand better why certain areas remain mixed and others do not thus helping to determine the ingredients for developing and maintaining mixed communities. The information will benefit communities elsewhere in Northern Ireland including the pilot projects for mixed community housing. There are an estimated 400 applicants on the waiting list from a mixed background who may wish to live in mixed community areas.

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.

Developing shared communities where people of all backgrounds can live, work, learn and play together is a key action of A Shared Future, as is the support and protection of existing areas where people of different backgrounds live.

This will be evidenced through the joint working between OFMDFM and colleagues in NIO, DSD, and the NIHE Community Cohesion Unit to promote good relations and to provide stable and safer neighbourhoods. Detailed actions will be contained in the triennial Action Plan on Good Relations.

In Scotland the Crown Office and the Procurator Fiscal Service have produced an analysis of charges brought in the first six months under section 74 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) act 2003. We believe that a similar system of monitoring the use of the Criminal Justice (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 would be beneficial. (Paragraph 100)

The Government accepts the Committee's recommendation and will work with enforcement and prosecution authorities to develop a similar mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of the Criminal Justice (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004.

We welcome the introduction of the Criminal Justice (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 and the inclusion of crimes against the disabled as a category of hate crime. We recommend that the PSNI, the Policing Board and the NIO closely monitor the effectiveness of this new legislation. Importantly, prosecutions need to attract widespread media attention to act as a deterrent to others that hate crime will be robustly tackled by the criminal justice system. (Paragraph 101)

As stated in the response to the Committee's recommendation at paragraph 29, the Government will work closely with the relevant authorities to ensure that the effectiveness of the legislation is monitored. The Government supports the Committee's recommendation that successful prosecutions are effectively publicised and where possible the Police Service will seek to highlight increased sentencing in these cases to provide a deterrent to potential perpetrators.

But more than messages are required. The law will be another "dead letter" unless the enforcement authorities, primarily the PSNI, use it vigorously. We expect them to do so. As we have pointed out earlier, the authorities have considerable ground to make up in persuading vulnerable groups that their concerns are being addressed seriously. This legislation is an opportunity to demonstrate that such legitimate concerns will be addressed. Those involved in the criminal justice system must not fail this test. When our successor committee looks next at this subject we hope that there will be a sound record of action as a result of this Order. (Paragraph 102)

The Government accepts the Committee's recommendation. The relevant criminal justice authorities will work collectively and individually to ensure that the public have confidence in the legislation.

We thoroughly endorse the Government's emphasis on the important role which local authorities have in the promotion of community harmony and driving out hate crime. Without the collaboration of local authorities it is difficult to see how any measures promoted by the central Government can succeed. (Paragraph 104)

Noted.

The Committee welcomes the work of local authorities to promote the quality of community life through community relations programmes directed against sectarianism. Many of these programmes are small scale but have a disproportionately large and positive impact. We commend those local authority officers who are responsible for putting them into practice and call on their councils

to do all in their power to support and further their efforts. It is vital that these programmes continue, and that funding for them is secure. We look to the Government to ensure that this is the case. (Paragraph 108)

In recent years, OFMDFM has invested around £1.9M per annum in the District Council Community Relations Programme.

As a result of the outworking of A Shared Future the current programme will be phased out and replaced with a permanent, 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.

The new scheme will be called the Good Relations Challenge Programme and will be managed by the re-shaped Community Relations Council. It will be established by 2007.

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.

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

If the Government's determination to root out hate crime is to succeed, then action by the minority support organisations is essential. We heard welcome evidence that some are willing to encourage members to report attacks and other incidents, and we hope that this approach will develop. That support will be inadequate unless proper funding is made available. We therefore welcome the Government's decision to make additional funding available to minority support organisations. We hope this will allow organisations to develop significant programmes of work over a sustained period of time, and to respond more effectively to the problem of hate crime. (Paragraph 114)

Government welcomes the recognition by the Committee of the resources made available to the minority ethnic voluntary sector in Northern Ireland for community development and capacity building within and between minority ethnic communities. There is now also a need to assist indigenous communities in Northern Ireland to build relationships with minority ethnic people and to put in place initiatives to assist with their integration. Voluntary organisations dealing with issues in respect of migrant workers also fulfil a very important role as this issue continues to come to prominence throughout Northern Ireland. The funding scheme operated by the Racial Equality Unit

within OFMDFM was re-launched in February 2005, under the new name of “Development Funding for Minority Ethnic Organisations”, to reflect the fact that funding is designed to encourage capacity building within organisations, with the ultimate aim of them taking up mainstream funding in the future. The main changes which have been made to the fund are designed to ensure that it is clearly focused on projects that can show quality of outcomes - particularly in terms of those which help minority ethnic people to integrate. There will still be support for capacity building within minority ethnic organisations, but one of the main aims now is to focus on outcomes that go beyond insularity – with relationship building as the ultimate goal.

Following the funding round in March 2005, the Minister announced a £1.7million allocation, across the next three years, to organisations throughout Northern Ireland. These organisations are developing programmes to help minority ethnic groups and migrant workers integrate into society and are taking steps to combat racism and racial inequalities. This will provide a period of sustained and focused support to those organisations working towards redressing the social exclusion, disadvantaged position and racism experienced by migrant workers and people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

We welcome the work undertaken by the trade union movement and employers to reduce sectarianism in the workplace. However, the evidence we had of increasing numbers of incidents of hatred at work makes it imperative that they continue working jointly with employers and others to develop sound strategies to address racism, homophobia, and discrimination against people with disabilities. (Paragraph 118)

Noted.

We urge the Churches to continue to build on the work they have initiated and to develop a broadly based good relations programme. The Churches’ Peace Education Project is a cross church education programme involving young people across Northern Ireland. We were concerned that Government funding for the project had not been granted for 2004-2007 and, as a consequence, the project had been scaled back. We hope that what appears to be a project with great potential can be funded fully in future, and that other, similar projects can be encouraged. (Paragraph 122)

The Churches’ Peace Education Project (CPEP) received funding from the Department of Education for many years under various schemes. The most recent funding was under the Community Relations Core Funding Scheme 2001-2004.

CPEP applied unsuccessfully for funding under the 2004-2007 round. The 2004-07 round of funding was vastly over-subscribed with 71 applicants seeking funding totalling £14m from a budget of approximately £3.5m. In anticipation of the round being over subscribed, the Department had taken steps to ensure that all applications were assessed fairly and accurately against the community relations criteria and had

appointed an Advisory Panel of highly qualified people from the education and community relations sector to assist it in the selection of successful organisations. The CPEP application came 51st out of the 71 applications. The Department was only in a position to fund 33 organisations.

All unsuccessful organisations had the right to appeal. CPEP chose not to appeal.

The next round of core funding will be for the period 2007-2010 and should be launched mid-2006. Any organisation, including CPEP, which feels it can meet the criteria, will be able to apply.

The Churches have a great responsibility for assisting in the development of a culture of tolerance and peace in Northern Ireland. Unless this potential is used to its utmost the drive for social normalisation in Northern Ireland is likely to falter, or even fail. We call on churchmen, and members of Church communities, to ensure that their influence and efforts are placed firmly behind the Government's hate crime policy. (Paragraph 123)

Noted.

The evidence we received indicates that the community and voluntary sector, churches, trade unions, employers, peace groups and those working with young people have undertaken positive work and projects to address all forms of hate crimes. We welcome this and urge them to redouble their efforts. The Government's work to establish a robust long-term strategy to tackle the prejudice and fear that lie at the roots of much hate crime requires the support of these bodies and individuals. Such a strategy will fail unless all sections of society provide it with their wholehearted support. (Paragraph 127)

Government is strongly committed to meeting the challenges laid out in the Committee's report and to leading all sections of society in Northern Ireland, by example, in a concerted and co-ordinated effort to eradicate all manifestations of hatred and intolerance, striving towards the creation of a shared society, defined by a culture of tolerance.

The Good Relations policy and strategic framework coupled with Northern Ireland's Racial Equality strategy will outline practical steps and actions, which will provide an effective and coherent response to racial and sectarian intimidation. While government will lead and co-ordinate actions flowing from these mutually compatible and complementary policies, it will be incumbent on elected representatives, individuals along with the various sectors and organisations in Northern Ireland to play their part to promote a shared Northern Ireland.

Our inquiry has shown that hate crime is a growing problem in Northern Ireland. We are convinced that the growth in these appalling crimes can be arrested if the

Government, the PSNI, and other criminal justice agencies increase their efforts to eradicate it. However, if a real impact on this problem is to be made the pace of policy and strategy development on the part of the Government, and enforcement on the part of the PSNI, will need to speed up. Policies need to be ‘smart’ transparent, timely, and capable of having an immediate impact ‘on the ground’. Strategy is not a substitute for rigorous practical action. Enforcement needs to be carried out with rigour. (Paragraph 129)

Noted, and addressed in government response paper.

More generally, addressing the problem of hate crime requires the commitment and dedication of many participants, the Government, the PSNI, the victims of hate crime, the churches and many more. In addition, each individual in Northern Ireland has a personal responsibility to treat everyone with respect and tolerance. This is the general standard we expect to see underpinning the policy work of the Government and enforcement by the police to combat hate crime. We believe that, with the full commitment of everyone, real progress can be made in eradicating these despicable crimes from society in Northern Ireland. We expect immediate action to be taken by the Government and the PSNI to provide the required leadership and vision to halt the growth of hate crime and further a peaceful society for the minority communities of Northern Ireland. (Paragraph 129)

Noted, and addressed in government response paper.