

Response from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to the Consultation by the Office of the First Minister and the deputy First Minister on Good Relations Indicator Review 2013/ 2014

11 March 2014

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland¹ sets out below its response to the OFMDFM Consultation '*Good Relations Indicator Review 2013/14*' (January 2014).
- 1.2 The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (the 'Commission') welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation² and the opportunity for further engagement towards shaping good relations indicators.

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Commission welcomes the production of indicators associated with the 'United Community' Strategy. We have also recognised that the development of a small number of appropriately focussed indicators is a challenging task.
- 2.2 We have sought to provide comments on all the proposed indicators, suggesting where further consideration could be given with specific reference to the aims and principles set out in the 'United Community' Strategy.
- 2.3 We have also made a number of general observations. We recommend:
- that the proposed indicators should not be seen or referred to as (a comprehensive set of) indicators of 'good relations', given the noted plans to develop additional indicators under other strategies (for example: race, sexual orientation etc).

¹ Details of the scope of the Commission's remit and duties are contained in Annex 1

² OFMDFM (2014) Good Relations Indicator Review, <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/review-good-relations-indicators-2014-consultation.pdf>

- that the commitment in the ‘United Community’ Strategy to take good relations considerations forward via a range of strategies suggests a scale of work that offers the potential for developing wholly new indicators where appropriate.
- that the indicators developed in support of ‘United Community’, while necessarily focussed on ‘community’ background, should also be capable of extension to the full range of anti-discrimination grounds.
- that there are merits in considering good relations indicators along 2 broad spectrums – noting the benefits in considering:
 - a continuum of indicators from attitudes to behaviours where ‘attitudes’ can be considered as ‘lead’ indicators (outcomes) for subsequent positive or negative ‘behaviours’ (impacts).
 - indicators which span aspects of ‘good relations’ to be achieved, as well as aspects of ‘bad relations’ to be overcome.

3 General Considerations

3.1 In responding, the Commission wishes to first set out some key strategic points with regards to the development of indicators of good relations, including those associated with the ‘United Community’ Strategy.

3.2 The Commission notes the intention to bring the number of indicators down from the approximately 100 currently used to around 20-30. The Commission recognises that the development of a small number of appropriately focussed indicators is a challenging task.

Criteria for Selection

3.3 In broad terms we welcome the criteria chosen for selecting the indicators i.e. outcome focussed; relevant; available (published regularly); and robust.

3.4 **With regards to ‘available’:** the Commission notes that proposed indicators are all based on existing data and is mindful that a reliance on existing data / indicators could limit the adoption of the most appropriate indicator(s). While we

agree that data should be regularly available, we do not consider that OFMDFM should be limited by data which is currently available, should wholly new data sources / indicators better measure target outcomes. Further, we consider that the range of current plans to advance good relations across a range of strategies suggests a scale of work that offers the potential for developing wholly new indicators where appropriate, including improvements to supporting surveys and/or data sources. The Commission's triennial Equality Awareness Survey³ contains a range of relevant questions and data which may serve to further inform considerations and approaches.

3.5 **With regards to 'outcome focussed'**: the Commission notes that OFMDFM has derived 'strategic outcomes', under each of the 4 shared aims of the 'United Community' strategy, as the focus for measurement⁴. We observe however that the derived strategic outcomes in some cases have an apparently different emphasis. By way of example:

- under Priority Area 2 (shared community) the shared aim *"to create a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals"* appears to be allocated the outcome of *"Increased use of shared space and services"*.
- under Priority Area 3 (safe community) the shared aim *"to create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around"* appears to be allocated the outcome of *"Reduce the prevalence of hate crime and intimidation"*.

3.6 As Indicators have been developed to meet the derived 'outcome' (rather than the 'shared aims' from the Strategy) the Commission recommends that OFMDFM should assure itself that the derived 'strategic outcomes' adequately represent the stated 'shared aims' and intent of the strategy.

3.7 **With regards to 'relevant'**: we consider that there are benefits in considering a continuum of indicators from attitudes to behaviours. As such, 'attitudes' could be considered 'lead'

³ ECNI (2012) Equality Awareness Survey 2011.
<http://www.equalityni.org/sections/default.asp?secid=7>

⁴ See annex 1 of this document for the 'strategic outcomes' that have been derived by OFMDFM as the basis for indicator development

indicators (outcomes) for subsequent positive or negative ‘behaviours’ (impacts).

- Aligned to this, we consider that attitudinal questions should, as a minimum, consider personal attitudes. We consider that questions relating to perceptions of wider community attitudes are of less direct relevance (but acknowledge that they may be of some utility in distinguishing where personal attitudes combined across a community may differ from individual perceptions of wider community attitudes);
- As suggested, we consider that there are merits in attitudinal questions being supplemented by indicators of the extent to which actual behaviours are being impacted.

3.8 Further, we observe that the vision set out within the ‘United Community’ strategy is for a community which is *“strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.”*⁵

3.9 We note the above excerpt includes aspects of ‘good relations’ to be achieved, as well as aspects of what might be considered ‘bad relations’ to be overcome.

3.10 We thus consider that the broad spectrum of indicators to be adopted should be focussed on tracking the advancement of good relations, as well as the diminution of ‘bad’ relations, including those principles specifically set out in the Strategy⁶.

3.11 We also consider that provision should be identified to allow the review and update of indicators (including across the range of proposed equality strategies) to take account of any subsequently agreed definition of sectarianism and/or good relations.

⁵ OFMDFM (2013), Together: Building a United Community. <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community-strategy.pdf> – page 3

⁶ The United Community Strategy (page 3) includes key underpinning principles (Cohesion ; Diversity; Fairness; Inclusion; Integration; Interdependence; Respect; Responsibilities; Rights; Sharing; Tolerance) as well as a noting (page 19) the importance of tackling the “underlying prejudices and behaviours caused by sectarianism”

‘United Community’ indicators: a subset of ‘Good Relations’ indicators.

- 3.12 The United Community Strategy notes that the: ***“main focus of this document is on improving community relations”*** [page 3], but that it will also outline a ***“strategic framework that will shape action in tackling sectarianism, racism and other forms of intolerance”*** [para 1.2].
- 3.13 The ‘United Community’ Strategy further notes that the ***“commitment to addressing these [wider] issues is reflected in separate policies and action plans that include a focus on the specific needs of some of the most vulnerable groups in society”*** [para 1.18].
- 3.14 The Commission notes that the proposed indicators are intended to be constrained in scope to monitoring the outcomes of the [4] key priorities established under the ‘United Community’ strategy⁷ and that other strategies will seek to develop additional indicators of good relations on other grounds. Evidence presented⁸ to the OFMDFM Assembly Committee also supports that other strategies (such as those relating to Race, Sexual Orientation etc) will also develop indicators of good relations.
- 3.15 Given the intention to progress good relations across a range of strategies, the Commission recommends that:
- consideration is given to how this suite of proposed ‘United Community’ indicators is named, referenced and communicated. Specifically, the Commission considers that referring to the proposed suite of indicators as ‘Good Relations indicators’ or similar would not convey the specific (community background) focus of the ‘United Community’ work;
 - indicators developed in support of ‘United Community’ should be capable of extension, beyond religion / political opinion / community background to the wider suite of grounds. As such, and where appropriate, we recommend that data for identified indicators should be collected across the range of anti-discrimination grounds;

⁷ OFMDFM (2014) Good Relations Indicator Review, <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/review-good-relations-indicators-2014-consultation.pdf>

⁸ OFMDFM (12 February 2014) - Briefing by OFMDFM Officials to OFMDFM Assembly Committee (audio recording)

- a timeline should be established for the prompt review and integration of indicators from across the range of proposed strategies. This would allow the learning from across the grounds to be integrated, and an integrated set of good relations indicators to be established.

4 Comments on proposed ‘United Community’ indicators

- 4.1 Each of the indicators proposed to measure the key strategic outcomes aligned to the four (4) Key Priorities are now considered in turn. The comments below should be read in the context of the specific focus of the United Community Strategy on community background / relations.

5 Our Children and Young People (Key Priority 1)

- 5.1 The key strategic outcomes and indicators aligned to ‘Key Priority 1: Our Children and Young People’ are:

Shared Aim: to continue to improve attitudes amongst our young people and to build a community where they can play a full and active role in building good relations.

Outcome 1.1: Improving attitudes between young people from different backgrounds

Indicator 1.1a

- % of children (age 16) who think relations between Protestants and Catholics are better than they were five years ago
 - % of children (age 16) who think relations between Protestants and Catholics will be better in 5 years time
- Source: Young Life and Times

Indicator 1.1b

- % who are favourable towards people from the Catholic community
 - % who are favourable towards people from the Protestant community
 - % who are favourable towards people from the Minority Ethnic Community
- Source: Young Life and Times

- 5.2 The Commission considers that Outcome 1.1 appears to be aligned with the ‘shared aim’ of the ‘United Community’ strategy.
- 5.3 **Indicators 1.1a and 1.1b** are proposed for measuring ‘Improving attitudes between young people from different backgrounds’.
- 5.4 The Commission considers that **indicator 1.1b** is a useful measure in assessing changes in personally held attitudes. However, while the Commission welcomes that consideration is being given to issues impacting on the Minority Ethnic Community, it is not clear how this relates to the focus of ‘United Community’ on advancing community relations. This indicator may thus be better considered in the context of the Race Equality Strategy and the commitment to develop good relations indicators therein.
- 5.5 The Commission considers that **indicator 1.1a** is of less direct relevance, as it does not relate to personal attitudes held, but rather a perception of changes in wider community attitudes. Further, although we are not arguing for the inclusion of a focus on Minority Ethnic Communities here, we do note the mismatch in coverage between indicators 1.1a and 1.1b.
- 5.6 In our 2010 response to the draft Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration the Commission stated that *“young people need the skills ... to recognise and reject discriminatory, negative attitudes and influences, such as sectarianism...”*.
- 5.7 We also set out actions that should be taken to prevent bullying and recommended citizenship programmes in order to promote reconciliation, understanding and respect for diversity.
- 5.8 In line with our general considerations set out earlier, we consider that there is thus the potential to develop indicators to track not only the advancement of the aspects such as ‘understanding and respect for diversity’ (contributing to good relations), but also the diminution of bad relations, including where young people may feel better enabled, or more likely, to identify or challenge negative behaviours or attitudes.
- 5.9 We consider that such an approach, combining ‘lead’ and ‘lag’ outcome indicators will provide richer suite of indicators, better

able to inform policy responses to ultimately drive ‘impact’ measures in the desired direction.

Outcome 1.2: Young people engaging in bringing the community together

Indicator 1.2a

- % of young people who have regular social contact with young people from 'other communities'

Source: Young Life and Times

Indicator 1.2b

% of young people who regularly socialise or play sport with people from a different religious community.

Source: Young Life and Times

Indicator 1.2c

- % of young people who have: done projects with pupils from other schools; had classes with pupils from other schools; used or shared sports facilities or equipment, like computers. Of those who have done projects, shared classes, facilities, etc.
- % who thinks sharing is a good idea.

Source: Young Life and Times, Kids Life and Times

- 5.10 We note that Outcome 1.2 differs from that set out in the shared aim (from “*to build a community where they can play a full and active role in building good relations*” to “*engaging in bringing the community together*”)
- 5.11 We recognise that a range of factors can have a significant impact on children’s development - including in family, community and school environments. In our 2010 response to the draft Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration the Commission determined that one of the key tasks should be to “*ensure that our children and young people grow up learning how to live, play and work together in a diverse society.*”
- 5.12 The Commission welcomes proposed **Indicator 1.2a** but would recommend (given the ‘United Community’ focus on community background) that ‘other communities’ is modified to expressly consider the Protestant / Roman Catholic communities⁹. We

⁹ Similarly, this indicator could be mirrored in the other proposed equality strategies (e.g. race strategy) with appropriate changes to the focus of “other communities”.

would make a similar comment with regards to ‘different religious community’ as used in **indicator 1.2b**.

- 5.13 We note the overlap (or mismatch) in **1.2a and 1.2b**, both focussing on social contact, but 1.2b extending to cover sport. OFMDFM could give consideration to how best to avoid overlap/ambiguity, for example, perhaps 1.2a focussing on social contact and 1.2b on sporting contact.
- 5.14 We note the focus on indicators 1.2a and 1.2 b on ‘regular’ social contact, but **indicator 1.2c** focussing potentially only on individual instances of educational contact. The Commission considers that regular and meaningful contact is important and thus that indicators should seek to measure such aspects.
- 5.15 Further, we consider this to be aligned with our recommendations on shared education¹⁰ and would recommend that indicators could consider the extent students are *routinely* taught together; in *shared classes* and if that sharing is considered to have *impacted meaningfully* or have been *central to their education*.
- 5.16 The Commission notes that **Indicator 1.2c** is not prescriptive with regards to the meaning of ‘other schools’ i.e. this may not be taken to mean schools from a different sector, e.g. between a Catholic maintained school and state sector controlled school.
- 5.17 The Commission also notes that there is overlap between **Indicator 1.2c and Indicator 2.1d** under Key Priority 2 and as such consideration should be given to the specific focus of each and amendments made to bring out the relevant focus under each section.

Indicator 2.1d

- % whose school has been involved in shared education with another school in the last academic year, broken down by type of activity.

Source: School Omnibus Survey

- 5.18 The focus on **indicator 1.2c** on school activities may not adequately contribute to measuring the intended *outcome*

¹⁰ ECNI (2012), [Submission to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Advancing Education](#)

regarding the extent to which young people are ‘*engaging*’ in bringing the community together’, as participation in such events may be a mandatory school activity.

5.19 The aspect of 1.2c on “% who thinks sharing is a good idea” may offer some potential in this regard if further developed and specifically focussed on the aspect of education noted above. There may also be merit in considering an indicator for the proportion of young people who are participating in and/or feel they are benefitting from engagement in citizenship type programmes to promote reconciliation, understanding and respect for diversity.

5.20 Indicators 1.2c and 1.2d use the Young Life and Times Survey as a data source which captures the views of young people up to the age of 16. The Commission also considers that there are merits more broadly in considering sharing in education beyond the age of 16, including with regards to Colleges of Further Education and Universities.

5.21 The following question from the Young Life and Times survey may also be worthy of consideration and/or further development in the context of engagement:

- Would you take part in a cross-community project in your area?
- If not, what factors prevent you from doing so?

6 Our Shared Community (Key Priority 2)

6.1 The following key strategic outcomes and indicators aligned to this Key Priority are:

Shared Aim: to create a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone.

Outcome 2.1: Increased use of shared space and services (e.g. leisure centres, shopping centres, education, housing)

Indicator 2.1a

- % who think that Protestants and Catholics tend to go to different local shops or use different GP surgeries and other services in their area.

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times

Indicator 2.1b

- % who think that leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres in their area are 'shared and open' to both Protestants and Catholics.

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times

Indicator 2.1c

- % of those who have children at school who think that their child's school is a shared space

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times

Indicator 2.1d

- % whose school has been involved in shared education with another school in the last academic year, broken down by type of activity.

Source: School Omnibus Survey

Indicator 2.1e

- % of people living in segregated areas (that is, 90% or more of one community background)

Source: Census of NI Population

- 6.2 The Commission considers it essential to recognise and address the considerable cost of separation between the two main communities. We welcomed the position in the 'United Community' Strategy that the concept of shared space does not have to be 'neutral space' or 'sanitised territory' and that it must embrace schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods and leisure facilities etc. We also welcomed the intention in the strategy to reduce chill factors and fears preventing open access.
- 6.3 We note that Outcome 2.1 differs from that set out in the shared aim (from "*to create a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals*" to "*Increased use of shared space and services*"). OFMDFM may wish to assure itself that any indicators aligned to this outcome adequately represent the stated 'shared aims' and intent of the strategy.
- 6.4 The Commission welcomes that the proposed indicators for **Outcome 2.1 and 2.2** are broad enough in scope to recognise that shared space should embrace schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces, and leisure facilities. We consider that outcome 2.2 (accessibility of space) may represent a 'lead' indicator for outcome 2.1 (use of space) and as such there may

be merits in reordering these indicators or making clear their relationship (one being an outcome which contributes to the subsequent impact).

- 6.5 We note however that increased participation in shared 'workplaces' is not included under outcome 2.1.
- 6.6 The Commission would note the important progress that has been achieved, associated with the implementation of the fair employment legislation. As such OFMDFM should give consideration to including an indicator associated with the proportion of workers employed in broadly representative workplaces.
- 6.7 As with indicator 1.1a, we consider that the focus of **indicator 2.1a** is of less direct relevance, as it does not relate to personal attitudes held, but rather a perception of wider community attitudes. We consider that there are clear merits in attitudinal questions, as a minimum, considering *personal* attitudes, for example, as per indicator **2.1b**.
- 6.8 As noted in our general comments, we do however also consider it important, alongside a consideration of attitudes, to also consider behaviours. For example, with regards to indicators 2.1a and 2.1b, it is likely of interest to consider the % of respondents who actually themselves avoid going to shops or GP surgeries etc in an area of the 'other' community etc.
- 6.9 Although **indicator 2.1c** may be of interest, it is hard to see from the consultation how it directly relates to its associated outcome measure "increased use of shared space". An amended version of this indicator may be more appropriate or may fit better under outcome 2.2 (accessible shared space) or indeed the stated shared aim of "*where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals*"
- 6.10 With regards to **indicator 2.1d**, the comments made earlier under key priority 1 with regards to sharing in education are relevant here and so are not repeated. Consideration should be given as to identifying the specific focus of each 'key priority' so as to avoid duplication.
- 6.11 We consider **indicator 2.1e** to be a useful indicator, though, as indicated in our general comments, there may be merits in

considering positive (good relations) aspects as well as questions related to attitudes alongside behaviours.

Outcome 2.2: Shared space is accessible to all

Indicator 2.2a

- % who would define the neighbourhood where they live as a shared space
Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times

Indicator 2.2b

- % who would prefer to live in a neighbourhood with people of only their own religion, or in a mixed-religion neighbourhood
- % who would prefer a workplace with people of only their own religion, or a mixed religion workplace
Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times

6.12 We note that Outcome 2.2 broadly mirrors that set out in the shared aim (“*where all areas are open and accessible to everyone*”)

We consider that there are merits in the indicators **2.2a** and **2.2b** proposed under outcome 2.2. We however have the following observations

6.13 They do not appear to contribute directly to the stated outcome of assessing “accessibility”.

- There may thus be merits in exploring some of the underlying ‘principles’ set out in the ‘United Community’ Strategy. For example, “*cultural expression is celebrated and embraced*” and “*where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together*” as well as such environments being “*free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.*”
- We would also reiterate our general comments on the importance of considering attitudes and behaviours (the indicators under outcome 2.2 do tend towards this).

6.14 We also note that indicator 2.2a only covers part of the scope of 2.2b (i.e. neighbourhoods, not workplaces) and so expansion of this or redefined indicators, to have mirroring coverage, may be of benefit.

7 Our Safe Community (Key Priority 3)

7.1 The following key strategic outcomes and indicators aligned to this Key Priority are:

Shared Aim: to create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety.

Outcome 3.1: Reduce the prevalence of hate crime and intimidation

Indicator 3.1a

- Number of racial incidents and crimes recorded
- Number of homophobic incidents and crimes recorded
- Number of sectarian incidents and crimes recorded
- Number of religion incidents and crimes recorded
- Number of disability incidents and crimes recorded

Source: PSNI Statistics

Indicator 3.1b

- The number of people presenting as homeless as a result of intimidation.

Source: Northern Ireland Housing Executive homeless presentation figures.

Indicator 3.1c

- % of people who felt intimidated by republican/loyalist murals, kerb-paintings or flags in the last year.

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times

(This may be modified / amended to reflect the outcome of Ministers consideration of the Haass report and any recommendations that they make).

7.2 We note that Outcome 3.1 differs from that set out in the shared aim (from *“to create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around”* to *“Reduce the prevalence of hate crime and intimidation”*). OFMDFM may wish to assure itself that any indicators aligned to this outcome adequately represent the stated ‘shared aims’ and intent of the strategy.

7.3 The Commission believes that one of the key strategic outcomes of the ‘United Community’ Strategy should be to reduce the ongoing and real sense of fear that exists in Northern Ireland. In the ‘United Community’ Strategy, there are clear overlaps between the key priorities on ‘shared’ and ‘safe’ communities – for example with regards to reducing chill factors

and fears preventing open access. The Commission considers that indicators relating to such factors are likely best placed under this key priority.

- 7.4 Our general comments with regards to ensuring a focus on attitudes and behaviours, as well as a continuum of measures regarding both indicators of good and bad relations are relevant here also.
- 7.5 For example, with regards to **Indicator 3.1a** while the inclusion of ‘reduction in hate crimes/incidents’ is a valuable indicator, there may be merit in supplementing this information with indicators regarding chill factors and fears, which may act as ‘lead’ indicators before hate crime and intimidation is manifest. These could perhaps be included here or under outcome 3.2. Further, reflecting this continuum, outcome 3.2 (safety) might be moved to before outcome 3.1 (intimidation / hate crime) which reads as more of a subsequent impact measure.
- 7.6 As with indicator 1.1b, while the Commission welcomes that consideration is being given to groups beyond community background (in this case racial, homophobic and disability related hate crime) it is not clear how this relates to the focus of the ‘United Community’ Strategy on advancing community relations. These indicators may thus be better considered in the context of the wider equality strategies being developed and the commitment to develop good relations indicators therein.
- 7.7 **Indicator 3.1b** refers to homelessness (intimidation) cases. We are mindful that the Housing Selection Scheme A1 (I) categorisation¹¹ of ‘homelessness due to intimidation’ covered a wide variety of situations ranging from sectarian or racist attacks to reactions to anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood disputes. If this remains the case, the Commission would recommend the disaggregation of this indicator to ensure only relevant intimidation is measured and/or clarifying the perceived cause of the intimidation and thus specific actions to address.
- 7.8 The Commission considers that **Indicator 3.1c** is likely a sound impact indicator. Aligned to our general comments, there may be merits in considering if there are any lead indicators (with a

¹¹ Northern Ireland Housing Executive (2000). The Housing Selection Scheme - http://www.nihe.gov.uk/housing_selection_scheme.pdf

focus on something short of ‘intimidating’) or also focussing on good relations aspects (e.g. extent to which such markings are seen as a non-threatening indication of cultural diversity or similar¹²). We note that the indicator covers a wide range of factors on which it is entirely possible that individuals may hold differing views. As such there may be merit in rewording and/or developing a singular focus.

Shared Aim: to create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety.

Outcome 3.2: A community where places and spaces are safe for all

Indicator 3.2a

- % of people who see town centres as safe and welcoming places for people of all walks of life.
Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times

Indicator 3.2b

- % who would feel safe going to events held in, for example, an orange hall, a gaa club, a protestant secondary school, a catholic secondary school.
Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times

7.9 We note that Outcome 3.2 differs from that set out in the shared aim (from “*where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety*” to “*where places and spaces are safe for all*”). OFMDFM may wish to assure itself that any indicators aligned to this outcome adequately represent the stated ‘shared aims’ and intent of the strategy.

7.10 The Commission is content that Indicators **3.2a** and **3.2b** measure Outcome 3.2 and that in broad terms they reflect our general comments on the importance of considering attitudes and behaviours. That said, consideration could perhaps be given to also including a measure associated with perceived safety of residential areas of the ‘opposite’ religion or similar (but we accept that indicator 3.2b may tend towards this).

¹² We note there is the potential for some overlap with indicator 4.2a (cultural diversity) and as such consideration should be given as to appropriate focus / placement.

8 An Increased Sense of Community Belonging (Key Priority 4)

8.1 The following key strategic outcomes and indicators aligned to this Key Priority are:

Shared Aim: to create a community which promotes mutual respect and understanding, is strengthened by its diversity and where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced.

Outcome 4.1: An increased sense of community belonging

Indicator 4.1a

- % who feel a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood.
- % who feel a sense of belonging to Northern Ireland as a whole.

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times

Indicator 4.1b

- % who feels they have an influence when it comes to any of the local decisions made in their neighbourhood.
- % who feel they have an influence when it comes to any of the local decisions made in Northern Ireland.

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times

8.2 We note that Outcome 4.1 differs from that set out in the shared aim (from “*to create a community which promotes mutual respect and understanding*” to “*an increased sense of community belonging*”). OFMDFM may wish to assure itself that any indicators aligned to this outcome adequately represent the stated ‘shared aims’ and intent of the strategy.

8.3 The Commission believes it is essential for all people to respect differences and to build a cohesive interdependent society that embraces diversity and celebrates our different cultures.

8.4 While **Indicators 4.1a and 4.1b** may measure the derived outcome 4.1, in respect to an ‘Increase sense of community belonging, we do not consider that they explicitly contribute to the overarching shared aim “*promotes mutual respect and understanding*” or cohesion across communities.

8.5 With regards to **Indicator 4.1a**, we consider that the latter measure (belonging to Northern Ireland”) is open to interpretation and may not directly measure cross-community cohesion.

8.6 Again, we would reiterate our general comments regarding the need to consider indicators of both attitudes and behaviours, as well as the merits of measuring across a continuum of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ relations.

Outcome 4.2: Cultural diversity is celebrated

Indicator 4.2a

- % who think that the culture and traditions of the Catholic community add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society
- % who think that the culture and traditions of the Protestant community add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society
- % who think that the culture and traditions of the Minority Ethnic community add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times

Indicator 4.2b

- % of Protestants who think that their cultural identity is respected by society
- % of Catholics who think that their cultural identity is respected by society

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times

(This may be modified/amended to reflect the outcome of Ministers consideration of the Haass report and any recommendations that they make).

8.7 We note that Outcome 4.2 (“*Cultural diversity is celebrated*”) broadly mirrors but is not as expansive as that set out in the shared aim (“*where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced*”)

8.8 The Commission welcomes that **Indicators 4.2a and 4.2b**, noting their alignment to our response to the 2010 consultation on a strategy for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration, which highlighted the need for ‘celebration of our different cultures’.

8.9 Again, while the Commission welcomes that consideration is being given to groups beyond community background (in this minority ethnic communities) it is not clear how this relates to the focus of ‘United Community’ on advancing community relations. As already noted, such indicators may thus be better considered in the context of the wider equality strategies being

develop and the expressed commitment to develop good relations indicators therein.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1 The Commission welcomes the production of the Indicators associated with the 'United Community' Strategy. We have also recognised that the development of a small number of appropriately focussed indicators is a challenging task. We have suggested that the commitment in the 'United Community' Strategy to take good relations considerations forward via a range of strategies suggests a scale of work that offers the potential for developing wholly new indicators as appropriate.
- 9.2 With regards to the proposed indicators, we have noted that the strategic outcomes derived by OFMDFM often do not appear to fully reflect the 'shared aims' of the United Community strategy.
- 9.3 We have recommended that there are merits in consider good relations indicators along 2 broad spectrums – noting the benefits in considering a continuum of indicators from attitudes to behaviours. We have also suggested that indicators may wish to span the aspects of 'good relations' to be achieved, as well as aspects of 'bad relations' to be overcome.
- 9.4 We have also cautioned that the proposed indicators not be seen or referred to as (a comprehensive set of) indicators of good relations, given specific 'community' focus of the United Community' strategy and the noted plans to develop additional indicators under other strategies (for example, race, sexual orientation etc). In this context we have also recommended that the indicators developed in support of the 'United Community Strategy', while necessarily focussed on religion / political opinion / community background should also be capable of extension to the full range of anti-discrimination grounds.
- 9.5 We have sought to provide comments on all the proposed indicators, suggesting where further consideration could be given, with specific reference to the aims and principles set out in the 'United Community' Strategy and in the context of our general comments above.

**Equality Commission
11 March 2014**