

**01/09/2009**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Unite Against Hate Campaign Launched**

Unite against Hate, a new multi-agency campaign initiated by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, Equality Commission, Community Relations Council, Northern Ireland Office Community Safety Unit and Police Service of Northern Ireland was launched in Belfast today (1 September).

The campaign will challenge the prejudices which if left unchecked, can result in Hate Crimes. The Northern Ireland welcome is world famous. This campaign will provide opportunities for ordinary people to demonstrate their opposition to the mindless minority who carry out Hate Crimes.

Local sporting stars and celebrities, including singer Peter Corry who has recorded the campaign anthem 'Man in the Mirror', will unite to endorse and support the campaign during a number of events and initiatives.

The campaign will highlight all six forms of hate crime, homophobic, racist, sectarian, faith, disablist and transphobic and challenges everyone in Northern Ireland to unite to stop it.

Over the coming months, the public will have the chance to show their support for the campaign by participating in a range of diversity events. A number of organisations including the Irish Football Association, Gaelic Athletic Association, Belfast Festival at Queen's and Culture Night Belfast, have already pledged support for the campaign.

“Northern Ireland is one of the safest places to live in the UK, and all our citizens, regardless of colour, creed, or political opinion, deserve to live free from fear of attack.

“Attacking someone because of their sexuality, race, religion or disability is an attack on their very identity as a human being, and society must challenge those who do so.

“Hate crime in all its forms is unacceptable and the ‘Unite Against Hate’ campaign provides the people of Northern Ireland with an opportunity to send out a clear message that they will not tolerate hate crime in any form.”

At the campaign launch, Acting Deputy Chief Constable Duncan McCausland said:

“Hate crime is unacceptable, no one deserves it and no one deserves to get away with it. While the Police Service is fully committed to playing our role in preventing these crimes, we cannot work in isolation to solve what is a wider societal issue. We all have a responsibility to unite against hate crime, and that is exactly what we hope this new initiative will deliver.

“In addition to supporting this campaign, we want to encourage people, whether they are victims of a crime or witnesses to an incident, to report it to police. There are a number of methods available to make reports; these are in person, telephone or online reporting,” he said.

Bob Collins, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland said:

“Expressions of hatred, whether in the form of violent attacks or in any other way, are a poisonous stain on any society and must be challenged whenever they surface.

“The Equality Commission welcomes this opportunity to work with all our partner bodies to ensure that the prejudices of a few will not be allowed to dictate the terms on which people can live and work in Northern Ireland.”

To support or find out further details about the campaign and planned events, look up [www.uniteagainsthate.org.uk](http://www.uniteagainsthate.org.uk).