

# Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998



EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

## PROMOTING GOOD RELATIONS

### A Guide for Public Authorities

October 2007

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



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Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

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ISBN: 978-1-906414-02-3

October 2007

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# Foreword

*“A Society’s cultural life is rich if people in the society can communicate with each other, describe their reality and their experiences, voice their feelings, understand one another and thus in the end - be in a position to respect one another”.*

**Council of Europe, 1978**

Northern Ireland’s recent history has been one of considerable political turmoil and community conflict resulting in social and economic disturbance and disadvantage for many living here. The Good Friday Agreement rightly recognised the need for a statutory intervention, situated within a framework of equality, to promote good relations between differing sections of the community in Northern Ireland. That found expression in the obligation placed upon designated public authorities to promote good relations in the development and implementation of their policies and in the discharge of all their functions, building on existing rights and responsibilities under fair employment and race relations legislation.

The increase in inward migration and changing demographics in Northern Ireland have reinforced the importance of constructively promoting good relations, have broadened the base of the debate on this important topic, and have underlined the need for all sectors (public, private, voluntary and community), political parties, trade unions and others to show commitment and strong leadership in addressing both sectarianism and racism.

Section 75 (2) places a duty on the public sector in Northern Ireland to put good relations at the heart of public policy and its implementation; to shape policies around the people they affect. It is not only a legal requirement; it is also a social and economic imperative. The public sector reaches into virtually every home and workplace in Northern Ireland and affects the lives of many in fundamental ways. By embracing the challenge that is embodied in this duty, by internalising the responsibility it entails, by recognising its centrality and its valid claim on time and resources, and by its creativity and imagination, the public sector can make a real difference to the quality of the relations between all who live in Northern Ireland.

The Equality Commission's Review of the Effectiveness of Section 75<sup>1</sup> found that, to date, public authorities have tended to focus on the equality of opportunity duty rather than the good relations duty when addressing their commitment to Section 75 and that, as a consequence, good relations work appears to have featured to a lesser extent in their Section 75 activities than work undertaken to promote equality of opportunity.

Clear leadership which identifies the direction and sets the tone is critical to the successful implementation of the good relations duty. Leaders of public authorities need to demonstrate publicly in an unequivocal manner that promoting good relations is both central to and a measure of their success. The duty is not just directed at removing or avoiding occasions of difficulty between various groups but, rather, is intended actively to encourage the expression of good relations and their promotion in all aspects of an authority's work. The inclusion of the duty in the legislation that sets out the constitutional framework for Northern Ireland is not a mere token or a platitude. It is intended to be transformative; it is about changing attitudes as well as behaviour.

Clearly, the legislative provisions of Section 75 (2) are directed towards the promotion of good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group. This Guide reflects that reality. However, while the legislation sets down what must be done, it does not preclude a broader view or the undertaking of other work. The Commission encourages public authorities to look beyond the three categories that the law now requires and to seek to promote good relations in respect of the other equality categories identified in the legislation and more generally.

Equality of opportunity and good relations are complementary and interdependent. Many public authorities are actively and enthusiastically implementing the good relations duty and much has been gained from their experience of what works and what doesn't. A variety of good practice examples from different sectors are included in this Guide. These examples, together with the practical steps and strategic approach recommended in this Guide, can help public authorities to realise the full potential of their role in the community. In that way they can help to create an inclusive society at ease with itself and with difference.



**Bob Collins**  
Chief Commissioner  
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

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<sup>1</sup> Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2007), Keeping it Effective: Reviewing the Effectiveness of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

- 1.1 **Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998** places a legal duty on designated public authorities to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different **religious belief, political opinion or racial group**. For ease of reference, the duty under Section 75 (2) is referred to as the ‘**good relations duty**’.
- 1.2 The Equality Commission’s statutory remit (see Chapter 4), coupled with its vision for Northern Ireland as “a shared, integrated and inclusive place, a society where difference is respected and valued based on equality of opportunity and fairness to the entire community”<sup>2</sup>, has driven the production of this detailed guidance for public authorities. In doing so, the Equality Commission has drawn on the unique knowledge, experience and expertise it has gained from its statutory role in advising public authorities on their good relations duty under Section 75, and on the provisions of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, through intervening on policy issues as diverse as the display of flags and emblems and the allocation of housing, to sensitive and appropriate access to health care and the location of public services.
- 1.3 The Commission is clear that Section 75 (2) formalises the shift from **managing** diversity and difference to **promoting** diversity and integration. It requires public authorities to take a **pro-active** initiating approach to contributing to a shared society, rather than responding to the effects of a divided one. It means recognising and acknowledging the legacy of decades of sectarian conflict, and challenging sectarianism and racism. This requires not only reacting swiftly to incidents and manifestations, such as graffiti or name-calling; but also educating and training people to understand that prejudice is not acceptable. It means creating an ethos, a culture, of good relations, and recognising the need to promote good relations both within, and between, communities.

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<sup>2</sup> Equality for All: Continuing progress in a changing environment. Corporate Plan 2006 – 2009, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2006), [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

- 1.4 Given that it is a legal requirement, it is vital that the good relations duty is taken seriously, and that its mainstreaming and implementation can be demonstrated and reported upon. The promotion of good relations requires **imagination, commitment** and **leadership**.
- 1.5 To meet its vision, and to enable designated public authorities proactively to meet their good relations obligations under Section 75 (2), the Equality Commission has established a working definition of good relations (see paragraph 2.1), and outlines in this Guide **key principles** for the successful implementation of the good relations duty (see Chapter 2); namely:-
- Leadership.
  - Commitment and communication.
  - The interdependence of equality of opportunity and good relations.
  - Integration not segregation.
  - Collaboration, co-ordination and consultation.
- 1.6 The Equality Commission recommends that public authorities take time to consider what they can achieve in promoting good relations in the context of the functions and remit of their organisation. One of the Commission's key recommendations is the development of a tailored **Good Relations Strategy**. Advice on the key elements of such a strategy is detailed in Chapter 3 of this Guide. It includes the development of a strategy and action plan which sets out the public authority's vision for good relations in the context of its functions; allocates responsibility for implementation; demonstrates top level commitment; and identifies specific measures which it intends to take within a specified timescale. Progress should be monitored, reported and reviewed annually, with an emphasis on outcomes. Public authorities should detail their actions, planned and taken, and report on progress made in their annual progress reports on the implementation of Section 75.

## Purpose and status of the Guide

- 1.7 The purpose of this Guide is to provide public authorities with information and advice on implementing the good relations duty. It outlines what the duty is, how public authorities can proactively address their legal obligations, sets out key principles for the successful implementation of the duty and includes a range of

examples of good practice by public authorities. The examples are based on information either directly supplied to the Equality Commission by public authorities or included as part of their annual reporting on the implementation on Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Implementation and good practice examples can also be found in the Equality Commission's publications *Audit of Progress on the Good Relations Duty 2000-2003*, and *Good Relations in Practice: A Report of Progress on the Good Relations Duty 2003-2005*.<sup>3</sup>

- 1.8 This Guide supplements the *Guide to the Statutory Duties*<sup>4</sup>, which constitutes the primary source of guidance on implementing Section 75. This Guide on Promoting Good Relations will frequently reference the *Guide to the Statutory Duties*, so it is important that readers consult that key document in conjunction with this guidance on the good relations duty (although some extracts are repeated here for ease of reference).
- 1.9 The aim of the Guide, whilst not legally binding, is to make recommendations and provide suggestions and examples of good practice that may be adopted or adapted. It is not intended to be prescriptive. What is appropriate action for one organisation may not be relevant to another, and there is considerable flexibility in the ways in which public authorities can address their good relations duty in the context of their own unique remit and functions. Public authorities should ensure that any work is underpinned by the key principles set out in this Guide, and that actions comply with equality scheme commitments.

## Legislative context

- 1.10 Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 states :

**'a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group'.**

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<sup>3</sup> Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2006), [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org).

<sup>4</sup> Equality Commission for Northern Ireland: Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: Guide to the Statutory Duties (2005).

- 1.11 Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 therefore places a statutory duty on public bodies to **pro-actively** address good relations. It means a public authority must consider how the policies it makes and implements affect relationships amongst the people it serves and employs. The purpose of the duty, like the equality of opportunity duty, is to mainstream good relations by placing it at the heart of public policy.

### ‘Regard’ and ‘due regard’

- 1.12 Section 75 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, states that a public authority must have **due** regard to the **need** to promote equality of opportunity, while it must also have under Section 75 (2), **regard** to the **desirability** of promoting good relations.

### What does having ‘regard’ or ‘due regard’ mean?

- 1.13 The *Guide to the Statutory Duties* explains “regard” and “due regard” in the following terms:<sup>5</sup>

“The term **due regard** was intended to be, and is, stronger than **regard**, but in either case the authority is required by the statute to take the specified matters **into account** and give them the required weight when carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland. Authorities must appreciate Parliament’s stated assessment that there is a **need** to promote equality of opportunity between the categories of persons specified in Section 75 (1) and a **desirability** of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group (Section 75 (2)).”

### What is the relationship between the equality of opportunity duty and the good relations duty?

- 1.14 In the Parliamentary debates on the Northern Ireland Bill, the then Secretary of State, Dr Marjorie Mowlam said:

“[We] regard equality of opportunity and good relations as complementary. There should be no conflict between the two objectives. Good relations cannot be based on inequality

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<sup>5</sup> Guide to the Statutory Duties, paras. 2.11 – 2.15.

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between different religions or ethnic groups. Social cohesion requires equality to be reinforced by good community relations.”<sup>6</sup>

Recognition of the inter-dependence of equality of opportunity and good relations is crucial.

- 1.15 Although there are differences under Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 as regards the implementation of the equality of opportunity and good relations duties, it is important to stress that there is a **clear duty** under Section 75 on public authorities to address **both** equality of opportunity **and** good relations, and this requires placing both at the heart of public policy decision making.

### What other equality legislation is relevant to the promotion of good relations?

- 1.16 Under Article 67 of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, **local councils** are under a duty ‘to make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that their various functions are carried out with due regard to the need to eliminate racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups’.
- 1.17 The **Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998** (as amended) (FETO), makes discrimination and harassment on the grounds of religious belief or political opinion unlawful. In addition, the **Fair Employment Code of Practice** provides general guidance for employers as regards the promotion of a good and harmonious working environment. Section 5.2 of the Code states that:

‘To promote equality of opportunity you should...promote a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere in which no worker feels under threat or intimidated because of his or her religious belief or political opinion, e.g. prohibit the display of flags...[etc]...which are likely to give offence or cause apprehension among particular groups of employees.’

The Fair Employment Code of Practice is given particular significance by FETO, which permits it to be taken into account by the Fair Employment Tribunal, in relation to the determination of any question before it. FETO was recently amended to incorporate a new statutory

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<sup>6</sup> House of Commons, Official Report, 27 July 1998, col.109.

definition of harassment (Articles 3A (1) and 3A (2)). The new harassment definition may be paraphrased as follows:

‘Harassment is unwanted conduct which is based on the grounds of religious belief or political opinion, and which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of an employee, or of creating an intimidating, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for an employee.’

- 1.18 Public authorities must ensure that they follow the recommendations of the *Fair Employment Code of Practice*, and the *Code of Practice for Employers for the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment*.<sup>7</sup> There are also a number of international obligations (listed in Appendix 6 of the *Guide to the Statutory Duties*), with which public authorities should familiarise themselves.

## Policy context

- 1.19 Complementary to the legislative framework described above, it is also important to take account of a number of important and relevant government policies in Northern Ireland.

## A Shared Future and the Racial Equality Strategy

- 1.20 In 2005, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) published *A Shared Future*<sup>8</sup>, the Government’s policy and strategic framework for good relations in Northern Ireland, and *the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland (2005 – 10)*<sup>9</sup>. These key government policies and their accompanying action plans represent clear central commitment to an equal and inclusive society in Northern Ireland. The strategies include specific actions for government departments and key non-departmental public bodies, such as the Police Service for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. They set out a number of policy objectives and identify priority areas. Other government strategies, such as the *Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People 2006 - 2016 and Lifetime Opportunities*, the

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<sup>7</sup> Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 1998, [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org).

<sup>8</sup> [www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk](http://www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk).

<sup>9</sup> [www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk](http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk).

*government's anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy*<sup>10</sup>, also have an important contribution to make to the inclusion of good relations in Northern Ireland.

## Review of Public Administration (RPA)

- 1.21 The Review of Public Administration (RPA)<sup>11</sup>, *A Shared Future* and other government strategies such as the *Racial Equality Strategy*, provide unique and unprecedented opportunities for government and the public sector to show leadership in establishing innovative, challenging and ambitious action plans that target resources where they are most needed, and ensure that equality of opportunity and good relations are at the heart of the development of public policy and service delivery, so that they have the most positive impact on the lives of everyone in Northern Ireland.
- 1.22 The Equality Commission acknowledges that the outcomes of the Review of Public Administration may have a significant impact on the number, structure and functions of public authorities in Northern Ireland. In addition, a range of good relations requirements may be placed on different public authorities under the RPA. Such changes will be taken into account in any future revision of this guidance. However, since the advice contained in this guidance is broad and non-specific regarding types or sizes of organisations, it should be relevant no matter how the public sector in Northern Ireland is organised or reorganised.
- 1.23 Section 75 (2) is a **continuing** duty and all newly established designated public authorities will be subject to the good relations duty. As set out above, it is recommended that public authorities develop a good relations strategy in order to provide a clear and workable framework for the promotion of good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group. Public authorities newly established under the RPA should, drawing on the work and experience of their predecessor organisations, develop and implement tailored good relations strategies which reflect the unique remit and functions of the new authority.
- 1.24 The new powers of well being and community planning proposed under the RPA should be used to maximise opportunities for

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<sup>10</sup> [www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk](http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk).

<sup>11</sup> [www.rpani.gov.uk](http://www.rpani.gov.uk).

embedding good relations into local services and governance arrangements. A discussion paper, *Embedding Good Relations in Local Government: Challenges and Opportunities*<sup>12</sup>, produced by independent consultants, makes recommendations in this regard.

## Why promote good relations?

- 1.25 In addition to the **legal requirements** as set out above, public authorities need to pro-actively address good relations to:
- address sectarianism and racism;
  - acknowledge poor relations beyond interfaces; and
  - recognise multiple identities.

## Addressing sectarianism and racism

- 1.26 An increasing immigrant population is leading to greater diversity in Northern Ireland. As populations become more mobile across the European Union and worldwide, public authorities face new challenges in addressing the needs of changing and increasingly diverse communities. The introduction of anti-discrimination legislation has had a significant impact in formally addressing issues of equality of opportunity. However, recent research refers to ‘the persistence of virulent sectarian bigotry and hostility in Northern Ireland.’<sup>13</sup> Sectarian and racist attacks on people and property continue to be reported every week<sup>14</sup>, and there is also evidence of continuing polarisation and segregation.
- 1.27 These factors underline the need for public authorities to give serious consideration and commitment to the good relations duty, and specifically to identify what this requires them to do as providers of services, as policy-makers or as employers, in the context of their distinctive functions and as components of the government and administration in Northern Ireland. Equality of opportunity and the promotion of good relations are central to the delivery of good quality public services and a better quality of life for everyone.

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<sup>12</sup> Good Relations Associates (2007), ECNI, [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org).

<sup>13</sup> Jarman, Neil, Institute of Conflict Research, ‘No longer a Problem? Sectarian Violence in Northern Ireland’ (2005) commissioned by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, [www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk](http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk).

<sup>14</sup> Statistics produced by the Police Service of Northern Ireland show that during the period 05/06, there were a total of 936 racially motivated incidents and 746 racially motivated offences. During the same period, there were 1,701 sectarian motivated incidents and 1,470 sectarian offences recorded (PSNI Statistical Report, 1 April 2005 – 31 March 2006, [www.psnipolice.uk](http://www.psnipolice.uk)).

## Not just interfaces

- 1.28 It is tempting to assume that there is only a need to promote good relations when trouble arises or when there is the potential for conflict – such as at interfaces, or in times of heightened tensions (for example, during the ‘marching season’) – and that when the situation is ‘quiet’ there is no need for intervention. However, racism and sectarianism are present at all levels in society. As the Community Relations Council states, “problems of community division exist in not just working class, segregated communities, but also in the minds of many people throughout the region irrespective of class or creed and some of whom are in positions of great power and influence.”<sup>15</sup>
- 1.29 Good relations work is not confined solely to interface areas, nor activated only when problems arise. The good relations duty and the tools of Section 75, such as the consultation and equality impact assessment requirements, provide a powerful framework for dialogue and for addressing hard issues in a structured way. Section 75 (2) provides a basis for developing innovative strategies to promote preventative measures, through fostering positive inter-communal work on an ongoing and local basis across the region. Such strategies need to be inclusive of the needs of the members of minority ethnic groups, and others who are subjected to discrimination and exclusion on other equality grounds.

## Multiple identities

- 1.30 The Equality Commission recognises the deep-rooted divisions within our society and the impact that this has on people’s daily lives. While not underestimating the crucial importance of eradicating sectarianism and racism, it is vital that a shared and pluralist society also includes proactively addressing homophobic and sexist actions and behaviours, as well as the outworking of prejudiced attitudes to disability. Hate crime law in Northern Ireland encompasses disability and sexual orientation, as well as religion, politics and race.
- 1.31 The legislation as it is currently framed specifies only three grounds for promoting good relations – **religious belief, political opinion and racial group**. Although work undertaken by public authorities to promote good relations with reference to men and women, sexual orientation, disability, age, people with and without dependants, or

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<sup>15</sup> [www.community-relations.org.uk](http://www.community-relations.org.uk).

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marital status, is **not** currently within the scope of the Section 75 (2) statutory duty, and is not legally required, it is of course **open** to public authorities to undertake work to promote good relations amongst other groups covered by Section 75, and the Equality Commission welcomes such work.

- 1.32 The statutory duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), which commenced on 1 January 2007, require public bodies to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and to encourage the participation by disabled people in public life. Measures undertaken to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, should work alongside initiatives taken by public authorities to promote good relations under Section 75 (2).

# Chapter 2 - Vision and Key Principles

## Vision

**“The Equality Commission has the vision of Northern Ireland as a shared, integrated and inclusive place, a society where difference is respected and valued, based on equality and fairness for the entire community.”<sup>16</sup>**

## What is meant by ‘good relations’?

2.1 Neither ‘good relations’ nor ‘promoting good relations’ is defined in legislation, nor is there a commonly agreed definition. A number of public authorities have developed their own vision or definition. The Equality Commission, drawing on the knowledge and experience it has gained in overseeing the implementation of Section 75 (2) across the three equality grounds, has developed a working definition of good relations, as follows:

“the growth of relationships and structures for Northern Ireland that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of this society, and that seek to promote respect, equity<sup>17</sup> and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms.”

2.2 The Government’s policy and strategic framework for good relations in Northern Ireland, *A Shared Future*,<sup>18</sup> was published in March 2005 and sets out the government’s vision for:

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<sup>16</sup> ECNI (2006), Equality for All: Continuing progress in a changing environment, Corporate Plan 2006 – 2009 [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org).

<sup>17</sup> “Equity is about ensuring that all sections of society have equal opportunities to participate in economic, political and social life through redressing inequalities arising independently from people’s choices.” (Future Ways, Equity, Diversity and Interdependence Framework, p 21).

<sup>18</sup> A Shared Future and the First Triennial Action Plan, [www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk](http://www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk).

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

2.3 It goes on to explain that ‘community relations’ refers specifically to divisions between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland, whereas ‘good relations’ refers to Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which relates to relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group<sup>19</sup>.

2.4 *The Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland (2005-10)*<sup>20</sup> also sets out a long-term, high level vision of Northern Ireland as:-

“A society in which racial diversity is supported, understood, valued and respected, where racism in any of its forms is not tolerated and where we live together as a society and enjoy equality of opportunity and equal protection.”

2.5 As stated in Chapter 1, the Equality Commission is clear that Section 75 (2) formalises the shift from **managing** diversity and difference to **promoting** diversity and integration. It requires public authorities to be **pro-active**, recognising and acknowledging the legacy of conflict, and challenging sectarianism and racism. This requires not only reacting swiftly to incidents such as graffiti or name-calling; but also communicating a clear message that prejudice is not acceptable. It means creating an ethos, a culture, of good relations, and recognising the need to promote good relations both within and between communities.

2.6 Promoting good relations can also involve tackling difficult issues such as the display of aggressive and intimidating flags and emblems, and taking steps to create safe and shared public spaces in towns and cities, that can be accessed and used by all sections of all communities.

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<sup>19</sup> Under Section 75, ‘religious belief’ includes people of all faiths and none; ‘political opinion’ includes members and supporters of any political party; ‘racial group’ includes people of minority ethnic origin, mixed ethnic origin, different national origin, including asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers, and Irish Travellers.

<sup>20</sup> [www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk](http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk).

- 2.7 In implementing the fair employment and race equality legislation, public authorities (and others) have been promoting a working environment in which everyone is treated with respect and dignity, where no-one feels threatened or intimidated because of their religious belief, political opinion or racial group. Shared space in the workplace can help to develop respect for, and understanding of, the needs and concerns of diverse communities; laying the foundations for the development of good relations, and creating the momentum for change elsewhere in society.
- 2.8 Promoting good relations can involve challenging misconceptions, preconceptions, stereotypical assumptions and prejudices against people perceived as outsiders or different (such as migrant workers or Irish Travellers), as well as making sure that people from all racial groups are aware of their rights and have access to, and information about, the services available to them. This guidance therefore includes examples of good practice that public authorities and others may use to promote positive attitudes towards people of different faiths (or no faith), different ethnic backgrounds, and migrant workers.

## Key principles

- 2.9 There are a number of key principles that should underpin a public authority's implementation of the good relations duty under Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

## Leadership

- 2.10 Public authorities each have a **unique contribution** that their organisation can make to promoting good relations in Northern Ireland. By exercising effective leadership and working in partnership with other public authorities and others, (for example, the voluntary and community sectors, private employers, political parties etc), public authorities can use their considerable influence to make a substantial and tangible difference to people's lives and benefit all communities in Northern Ireland.
- 2.11 **Effective leadership** across the political, public, private and voluntary and community sectors is essential to bring about change and to convey consistent messages. Visible committed leadership gives clear vision and direction, and shapes the culture of an organisation,

creating an environment in which good relations can flourish.

- 2.12 The Equality Commission has found that effectiveness in meeting the good relations duty under Section 75 (2), has been most apparent in public authorities where there is evidence of leadership at the highest levels. Some public authorities have embraced the spirit of the legislation, and demonstrated significant commitment and leadership, by embedding and mainstreaming the good relations and equality of opportunity duties under Section 75 into their core business and functions, rather than viewing it as a separate or parallel process.
- 2.13 The promotion of good relations must be **supported** and **endorsed** at the highest levels of an organisation, by both the administrative and governance heads, providing positive and influential role models both in public and to employees. They need to be willing to tackle sensitive and difficult issues, and to challenge sectarianism and racism in all their forms.

## Commitment and communication

- 2.14 Strong, visible commitment to improving relations is essential to successfully mainstreaming and implementing the promotion of good relations. Commitment must flow from the highest level and throughout the whole organisation – horizontally and vertically.
- 2.15 One way of ensuring this happens is to include **objectives** relating to the promotion of good relations in corporate and business plans, or their equivalents, and in the performance measures of individual employees. These will vary according to each employee's job description and responsibilities.
- 2.16 Commitment can best be measured through the visible allocation of **resources**. The sustained provision of resources to the implementation of Section 75 is essential to the continuing ability of staff to deliver on actions. Commitment must also therefore include the allocation and **continuing** allocation of appropriate and sufficient resources, in terms of people, time and money, to the effective implementation of a good relations strategy or programme.
- 2.17 **Communication** is a key element in ensuring the effectiveness of any policy or strategy. When people are informed about what an organisation is doing, why they are doing it, and their views are

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sought on how to do it, a sense of ownership and inclusion is developed.

- 2.18 The promotion of good relations by public authorities contributes to a society that is more inclusive, more cohesive, more efficient and more effective. Public bodies have a **responsibility** to use their authority and **considerable influence** to contribute to the creation of a shared society in which everyone feels not only physically safe, but also safe in their beliefs and opinions.
- 2.19 Organisations should take all available opportunities to **communicate** and reiterate their commitment, both internally and externally, to their good relations strategy, and the work they are undertaking to promote good relations, both within and between communities (see paragraphs 3.34 – 3.37). Information from annual progress reports and public authorities’ five-year review of equality schemes indicates that public authorities have tended to focus on the equality of opportunity duty rather than the good relations duty when communicating their commitment to Section 75. It is essential that both duties are addressed, and that both employees and the public are aware of an organisation’s commitment to promoting good relations and the positive benefits this has for policy implementation and service delivery.
- 2.20 Public authorities should also ensure that there is a consistent message across the organisation (in terms of words and actions), as regards commitment to promoting good relations, and that different parts of an organisation **do not undermine** the proactive work of other parts.

## The interdependence of equality of opportunity and good relations

- 2.21 Equality of opportunity and good relations are inextricably linked and interdependent, and both must be addressed by designated public authorities. A failure to achieve one impacts on the ability to achieve the other. The Equality Commission has consistently stated that “good relations cannot be delivered without equality also being delivered.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Guide to the Statutory Duties 2005, ECNI, [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org).

2.22 Section 75 recognises the interdependence between equality of opportunity and good relations, and this was clearly articulated by the then Secretary of State during the parliamentary debates on the passage of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Bill through Parliament.

“Good relations cannot be based on inequality between different religions or ethnic groups. Social cohesion requires equality to be reinforced by good community relations...”<sup>22</sup>

2.23 Promoting equality of opportunity sometimes requires the use of positive action measures in order to address existing inequalities with a view to achieving a level playing field for all. In such circumstances, public authorities must have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations both within and between communities, on the grounds of race, religious belief and political opinion, and consider what steps need to be taken to gain the confidence, trust and acceptance of all parts of the community. Communication of the reasons for the positive action is essential in this situation. The equality impact assessment mechanism is an essential tool for identifying relevant equality issues, and actual and perceived adverse impacts, leading to the consideration of appropriate mitigating measures or alternative policies.

## Integration not segregation

2.24 In the past, Northern Ireland has dealt with the conflict by providing separate services, such as housing, leisure facilities, and education, for different communities. However, separation emphasises difference and encourages mistrust. Economically, as well as morally, the provision of parallel services is inefficient and unsustainable. In addition, the ‘human cost’ of a divided society in terms of the detrimental impact on the health and well-being of communities is unacceptable. The Equality Commission has consistently emphasized that ‘separate but equal’ is not an option.

2.25 Sectarianism, racism and division all cost jobs and damage prosperity, and the provision of parallel but separate services for different communities is not only socially but also economically unjustifiable. Northern Ireland needs to be able to compete in a global economy, and investment and tourism depend on social and economic stability.

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<sup>22</sup> Dr Marjorie Mowlam, House of Commons Official Report, 27 July 1998, col. 109.

- 2.26 A shared society is one which is at ease with diversity. It is held together by a willingness to engage in dialogue, on a basis of equality, by a commitment to the common good, and by a culture of acceptance. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 is an important tool in working towards this vision. It provides the driver and the mechanisms to enable public bodies to identify, and remove or reduce, barriers.

## Collaboration, co-ordination and consultation

- 2.27 Progress reports received by the Equality Commission to date indicate that there is significant value in public authorities working together to take a joint approach to the promotion of good relations. The Equality Commission encourages public authorities to share information and good practice on promoting good relations. Co-ordination reduces the need for every organisation separately to research problems, identify opportunities and develop strategies, plans and training programmes, and to address common problems, thus achieving economies of scale. Sometimes, separate overall co-ordination bodies for a sector facilitate this; in other cases, joint work is co-ordinated by a Forum or Steering group, which is representative of all of the organisations in the collective.
- 2.28 There are good examples of co-ordination within various sectors; for example, education (Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC) and its work with the Further Education Colleges (see case study in Annex 1), the Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence (JEDI) project with the Education and Library Boards; the Higher Education Equality Consortium; health (Southern Health and Social Services Board (SHSSB) and Eastern Health and Social Services Board (EHSSB) areas); and local government sectors (for example the mid-Ulster councils).
- 2.29 There are also examples of public authorities across sectors working together on a geographical basis. For example, the Southern Health and Social Services Board and Trusts, and the Southern Education and Library Boards (SELBs), worked with the Social Security Agency and Section 75 umbrella organisations in the voluntary and community sectors, to establish a local interpreting service for the Chinese and Asian communities.

## Example

During 2005/06, the five education and library boards and the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards developed a Good Relations Policy and Strategy, which incorporated three important elements: racial equality; community relations; and social inclusion.

The policy emerged from the Good Relations duty encompassed in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act; it was further developed by the 'Shared Future' document published in March 2005 and substantially enhanced by the *Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland* published in July 2005.

The strategy sets out the context, the policy position, a vision, values and identified shared aims, including the promotion of good relations, equal protection, equality of service provision, participation, dialogue and capacity building. A number of actions were identified under each aim, with responsibility allocated, timescales and anticipated outcomes (which will facilitate evaluation, monitoring and review).

While not specifically stated as an objective, this partnership approach ensures effective use of resources, avoids repetition and ensures consistency, and shares experience.

- 2.30 **Partnerships** with the voluntary and community sectors, which already make a substantial contribution to the achievement of better relations between communities, are particularly important. Drawing on its experience from over-seeing the implementation of Section 75, the Equality Commission recognises the importance of ensuring that the **capacity** of the voluntary and community sectors to deliver community development (and work in partnership with the public sector), is **maintained** and **reinforced**.
- 2.31 Public authorities' approved equality schemes include commitments to meaningful and inclusive consultation, as detailed in the **Guiding Principles on Consultation** and in the explanatory notes in the *Guide to the Statutory Duties*.<sup>23</sup> These apply to all aspects of implementing an equality scheme, and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, and are particularly pertinent to communication and consultation with third sector partnerships, in order to ensure effective engagement and partnership working (see also Chapter 4).

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<sup>23</sup> Guide to the Statutory Duties (pp18 – 25 and pp57-58).

# Chapter 3 - Implementing the Good Relations Duty

## How to Implement the Good Relations Duty

- 3.1 The purpose of this section is to provide public authorities with information, advice and recommendations on implementing their statutory duty under Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, using examples of practical implementation and actual good practice. The **legislative context** of the good relations duty is set out in Chapter 1 of this Guide, while Chapter 2 sets out the Equality Commission's **vision** and **key principles** for promoting good relations in Northern Ireland.
- 3.2 Analysis of Section 75 annual progress reports indicates that good relations work appears to have figured to a lesser extent in public authorities' Section 75 activities than work on equality of opportunity. As emphasised at paragraph 2.12, equality of opportunity and good relations are inextricably linked and interdependent, as failure to achieve one impacts on the ability to achieve the other. Both must be addressed by public authorities. The legislation requires public authorities to implement Section 75 (2) and to **demonstrate** this with **tangible** action. Promoting good relations involves a level of engagement from public servants that has never before been required – to change not only behaviour but **attitudes, hearts and minds**.
- 3.3 The promotion of good relations by public authorities must be action-based in a way that is tailored to the specific remit and functions of the organisation. Each public authority needs to ascertain what needs to be done, and what can be done in the particular circumstances in which it carries out those functions. Therefore, while this Guide provides advice and makes recommendations, not every measure will be appropriate for every organisation, and there is considerable flexibility in the ways in which public authorities can address their good relations duty. What is important is that the good relations duty is taken seriously, and that it is pro-actively implemented, monitored and reported upon.

## Mainstreaming good relations into public policy decision-making

- 3.4 The purpose of the good relations duty, like the equality of opportunity duty, is to **mainstream** good relations by placing it at the heart of

public policy decision-making. Promoting good relations must be central to the functions of a public authority and an integral part of policy development and service delivery in an organisational wide approach, which includes incorporating specific objectives, targets and performance measures into corporate, business, and/or operational plans. The equality of opportunity and good relations duties under Section 75 should become core business priorities, rather than being seen as a parallel process, so that good relations is incorporated into all policy decisions at all stages and at all levels.

- 3.5 There must be transparent **responsibility** and **accountability** for driving the authority's good relations programme of work, and this should be clearly assigned. Information about the implementation of equality schemes shows that where there is clarity regarding responsibility for Section 75 obligations, such as through job descriptions and dedicated units, implementation benefits. Some organisations have appointed Good Relations Champions, or specifically designated an individual or group to implement their agreed programme of work on Section 75 (2). However, promoting good relations should **not be viewed as solely their responsibility**. Each member of staff should be encouraged to consider how they, through their own particular roles and duties, can contribute, so that the promotion of good relations is mainstreamed throughout the organisation.

## Compliance with equality scheme commitments

- 3.6 Equality schemes produced by designated public authorities and approved by the Equality Commission include, as a minimum, a commitment to 'have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.' Equality schemes also detail the public authority's arrangements for **assessing compliance** with its Section 75 duties, and set out **commitments** in relation to internal arrangements for ensuring that the duties are effectively complied with, for monitoring and reviewing progress, screening and impact assessment, training and access to information and services. Schemes also include a commitment to conducting an annual review of progress made in implementing the arrangements specified in the equality scheme and in complying with the statutory duties. These commitments and arrangements relate to **both** the good relations duty and the equality of opportunity duty. The approved equality scheme is therefore a public authority's **primary framework** for implementing the good relations duty.

- 3.7 The Equality Commission **recommends** that public authorities' equality schemes set out a **clear** and **unequivocal commitment** to promoting good relations. Public authorities must ensure they **comply** with all good relations actions to which they have committed to in their equality schemes. The Equality Commission will be producing further guidelines on the form and content of equality schemes as a result of the Section 75 Effectiveness Review.

## Functions

- 3.8 Each public authority needs to consider what promoting good relations means in the context of their organisation and functions, so that the action it takes is tailored, relevant and appropriate. 'Functions' is the word used in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to describe the activities of public authorities, and includes a public authority's powers and duties. Certain functions may be more relevant than others to the good relations duty under Section 75 (2). Public authorities should take care when assessing relevance, however, as many functions may not immediately appear to be relevant to the promotion of good relations. In addition, the functions of a public authority may change over time and it is important to recognise that an organisation's approach to good relations will need to be regularly reviewed to reflect its circumstances, (for example, as a result of the Review of Public Administration).

## Procurement

- 3.9 Public authorities enter into large numbers of contracts with private and voluntary organisations for goods, works, services and staff. As procurement is a **function** of public authorities, regard to the desirability of promoting good relations under Section 75 (2) is required in carrying out the procurement process.
- 3.10 The Equality Commission has developed separate guidance on procurement which sets out how public authorities can build on good practice to date, and capture opportunities, learning and experience. The procurement guidance has been written at a time when the scale of investment in infrastructure in Northern Ireland offers the opportunities for significant use of the procurement process to promote good relations and equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity and good relations are cross cutting themes which are integral to all of the procurement principles.

## Screening and impact assessment

- 3.11 Section 75 provides ready-made and useful policy tools for promoting good relations. By **screening** and conducting **impact assessments**, public authorities can both address negative policy impacts (perceived or actual disadvantages), and pro-actively identify opportunities to encourage and facilitate better relationships. A public authority should therefore consider using the screening and impact assessment tools to assess how its functions, and the policies it makes and implements, affect relationships amongst the people it serves and employs.
- 3.12 Public authorities should give **greater consideration** to those functions or policies that have the **most effect** on promoting good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. Where changing a policy, or introducing a new policy, would significantly benefit the promotion of good relations, the need for such a change or new policy will carry added weight when balanced against other considerations.
- 3.13 Policies which impact on good relations will also have an impact on equality of opportunity. The Equality Commission's *Guide to the Statutory Duties*<sup>24</sup> recommends that any policy with an impact on good relations **should be screened in**. The screening process is not just about identifying adverse impact; **it is an opportunity to identify how to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations**.
- 3.14 Screening can help to identify what current or existing work promotes good relations, and where there is potential for further or better promotion. It therefore enables the identification of key areas or policies for strategic action to be taken. Conversely, the consideration of work or policies which have an **adverse impact** or **potential adverse impact** on good relations identifies the need for mitigating measures or alternative policies.
- 3.15 The *Guide to the Statutory Duties* states that a "systematic review of each policy is required."<sup>25</sup> One of the four screening criteria that must be considered addresses the promotion of good relations:

‘Is there an opportunity to **better** promote equality of opportunity or good relations by altering the policy or working with others in government or in the larger community?’<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Guide to the Statutory Duties, p61.

<sup>25</sup> Guide to the Statutory Duties, p61.

<sup>26</sup> Guide to the Statutory Duties, p61.

Likewise, proposed policies must also be subject to screening, and the same screening criteria must be applied.

- 3.16 The Equality Commission recommends the use of the seven-step equality impact assessment (EQIA) procedure to consider whether, and how, policies have an impact on good relations, whether that impact is positive or negative, and to consider mitigating measures and alternative policies which might better promote good relations.
- 3.17 The benefits of using the impact assessment tool include the following:
- It is a useful mechanism for addressing contentious issues within a statutory framework.
  - Consultation will be inclusive and participatory, allowing all views to be expressed, heard and taken into account.
  - It enables the acknowledgement of views and impacts.
  - It provides the opportunity for an evidence-based decision-making approach.
  - It provides coherence with policy development processes in public authorities.
- 3.18 Local councils in particular have made significant efforts to progress good relations through this process; with policies regarding bilingualism, celebratory bonfires, the display of portraits of the Queen, flags and emblems including the flying of the union flag from council buildings, and community development funding, being subject to EQIAs. Other policies examined by the seven-step impact assessment process include, policies on minority languages (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure), a policy on unauthorised encampments (Department for Social Development) and good relations and race relations policies (Further Education sector).
- 3.19 Conversely, failure to screen and conduct an equality impact assessment has been found by the Commission to be a breach of an equality scheme.

### **Example**

In March 2007, the Equality Commission completed an investigation which concluded that a local Council had failed to comply with its equality scheme by not conducting a screening exercise, and by not conducting an equality impact assessment in relation to the

presence of an unauthorised Memorial to IRA hunger strikers which had been erected on Council-owned land. The Commission considered that although the Council was not responsible for the original placement of the Memorial on its property, it was responsible for the action taken subsequently and adopted a policy of allowing the Memorial to remain in place. The decision to dispose of the land in question is also a policy, which the Council acknowledged by screening and deciding to conduct an equality impact assessment of that decision.

In its report of the investigation the Commission states that, “the political nature of the Memorial, and its high level of visibility...may have the effect of marking the village out as Nationalist or Republican, and may not be conducive to good relations, and therefore the matter did have sufficient equality implications to be fully considered by way of equality impact assessment.

### **Example**

In 2003, a local council conducted an equality impact assessment (EQIA) of its policy in relation to the display of the union flag and concluded that it be flown only at the council’s headquarters on the days designated by the Secretary of State in the Flags Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000. In May 2005, as a consequence of a motion passed by the council, the union flag was flown at six council locations. The Equality Commission was concerned that the council appeared to have introduced a policy which departed from the decision arrived at following the 2003 EQIA. Following an investigation, the Equality Commission concluded that there had been a failure by the local council to comply with the commitment in its approved equality scheme to “take into account any equality impact assessment and associated consultation when making its decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted.” As a result of the investigation the Equality Commission recommended that the council follow the outcome of its own EQIA.

## **Corporate objectives**

3.20 As recommended in the *Guide to the Statutory Duties*:

‘As part of the corporate planning process, objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties should be built into corporate and annual operating plans. These should be reflected at all levels of strategic planning within the organisation, including staff objectives

and annual plans. Progress on meeting objectives relating to the statutory duties should be monitored and reported upon at the most senior level within the organisation on a quarterly basis.<sup>27</sup>

- 3.21 The development and inclusion of specific good relations objectives in corporate plans, as well as objectives relating to scheme implementation and the promotion of equality of opportunity, demonstrates that the organisation has given serious consideration to its role in promoting good relations in the context of its specific remit. It also ensures the inclusion of good relations work in corporate reviewing and evaluation processes. It enables it to be cascaded down into business, operational or divisional plans, and gives a focus to its inclusion in the individual objectives of employees.

### Example

The corporate plans of the Staff Commission for the Education and Library Boards and the five Education and Library Boards declare that the organisation fully supports the principles of fairness, equality, accessibility, inclusivity and promotion of choice, and have as a key corporate objective or core value the promotion of equality, rights and social inclusion. Each states that objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties have been mainstreamed into the organisation's corporate and business plans and that equality objectives have been built into performance targets.

## Developing and implementing a Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan

- 3.22 The Equality Commission **recommends** that public authorities develop a **Good Relations Strategy** in order to provide a clear and workable framework for, and to formalise its commitment to, the promotion of good relations between people of different religious beliefs, political opinions and racial group. This will provide a consistent and cohesive approach to the promotion of good relations throughout the organisation. Such a strategy should demonstrate that the public authority has considered what good relations means in the context of the organisation, taking into account the demography, geography, monitoring information, profile of service users, etc.; and identify the organisation's priorities and the key strategic areas in which it is most likely to be able to promote good relations.

<sup>27</sup> Guide to the Statutory Duties, Section 4, paragraph 2 (a).

3.23 The good relations strategy can be a separate strategy or part of a wider equality strategy. What is important is that it clearly reflects commitments made in equality schemes, sets out the organisation's vision for good relations in the context of its functions, allocates responsibility, demonstrates top level commitment, identifies the specific measures which it intends to take in an **action plan** with a timetable, and where appropriate, allocates dedicated resources to these measures. Progress should be monitored, reported and reviewed annually, with an emphasis on outcomes. A good relations strategy should include:

- a vision or aim (reflecting leadership);
- the key principles under-pinning the Strategy (see Chapter 2);
- an action plan to include (and clear statements of commitment to) specific measures with a timetable for implementation;
- a commitment to consultation ( i.e. ongoing engagement with and participation by stakeholders);
- a commitment to the communication of the strategy;
- training plans; and performance indicators/targets; and
- a commitment to regularly monitor, review and evaluate the strategy and action plan.

### Example

In January 2001, Belfast City Council (BCC) adopted promoting good relations as a corporate objective. In February 2003 the Council unanimously adopted a Good Relations Strategy, entitled 'Building Our Future Together', which was officially launched in January 2004. It was developed by a Good Relations Steering Panel made up of one Councillor from each of the six political parties on the Council, plus representatives from the churches, trades unions, business sector, minority ethnic groups and the Community Relations Council. The Good Relations Steering Panel continues to direct the work of the Good Relations Unit in equality, community relations and cultural diversity.

## Good Relations Frameworks

3.24 The Equality Commission is aware of the proactive work being undertaken by public authorities using good relations frameworks, such as the *Equity, Diversity and Interdependence Framework* by Future Ways, or the Community Relations Council's *A Good Relations*

*Framework.* The Equality Commission endorses the use of these frameworks by public authorities in the implementation of their good relations duty, as meeting its recommendation to develop a specific strategy, plan or programme of action to promote good relations. However, it is also important that public authorities consult this Guide, and use it as a benchmark, when addressing their obligations under Section 75 (2).

- 3.25 Public authorities must determine the existing situation, identify the organisation's potential for promoting good relations in Northern Ireland, identify areas for action, draw up an action plan and regularly review and revise it. Available frameworks may greatly assist public authorities in this objective.

#### **Example**

Newry & Mourne District Council's REDI (Relationships in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence) programme was initiated with the assistance and advice of Future Ways. A detailed case study is included in Annex 1.

#### **Example**

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) has embarked on an initiative, 'Building a Learning Model around Good Relations', facilitated by the University of Ulster's Future Ways programme, which it regards as 'not a training but a learning project'. Following initial discussions, a staff development group was set up and prepared an action plan, which was circulated to all local teams. The achievements identified by the Board include; that good relations is now a key theme of corporate and business plans, and of staff induction; that PBNI is feeding its good relations experience into the wider criminal justice system; and that good relations is now part of the criteria for eligibility to secure Board Community Development funding.

## **Vision or Aim**

- 3.26 Neither 'good relations' nor 'promoting good relations' is defined in legislation, nor is there a single agreed definition. Public authorities may wish to adopt a vision or aim developed by another organisation, or develop their own vision or aim for promoting good relations in the context of their organisation.

- 3.27 A vision statement may be aspirational, and need not be elaborate; it should articulate the aims of the organisation in the context of its remit and functions. However, the development of such a vision statement should not delay the identification of relevant actions to be taken.
- 3.28 A good relations vision might include a statement of commitment to the promotion of good relations, which may then be formally and publicly launched to initiate the authority's Good Relations Strategy.

### **Examples of visions and aims**

#### **Eastern Area Equality and Human Rights Best Practice Forum**

launched its statement during Community Relations Week in 2005:

“The EHSSB is committed to the promotion of good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and/or racial group. As a health and social services organisation we are committed to promoting respect for diversity and to challenging sectarianism and racism in both employment and services.”

The Good Relations statement adopted by each Eastern Board Trust has been printed on to a freestanding banner and is displayed throughout each organisation at reception areas, at staff training sessions and public consultations events.

**Belfast City Council** - “Living and working together with understanding and respect and without fear or mistrust”.

**Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:** “Good relations is about promoting fairness, encouraging respect for difference and delivering trust between people of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group”.

**Community Relations Council:** “Good Relations challenges sectarianism and racism, promotes equality, develops respect for diversity and raises awareness of the interdependence of the people and institutions within NI” (CRC, A Good Relations Framework).

This has been adapted by a number of public authorities which have worked with the Community Relations Council.

**The Further Education Colleges**, as part of their AGREE programme, (Actioning Good Relations, Equity and Equality), “the ability to acknowledge the existence of conflict, or any tacit cultural tension, and to discuss what are often contentious issues in a safe and supportive environment”.

- 3.29 The Equality Commission’s working definition of good relations is set out in Chapter 2 of this Guide, as is the government’s vision as stated in *A Shared Future*.

## Consultation

- 3.30 Like all elements of implementing the Section 75 statutory duties, consultation is key. In developing a vision, determining what is to be achieved, identifying priorities, actions and timescales, and deciding what is to be monitored and how, it is essential to obtain the views of those who are likely to be affected by the actions of the public authority. As set out earlier, consultation is a key principle of promoting good relations which should underpin the good relations strategy. Consultation with affected communities will increase the success of the strategy, as will working with the community to implement the strategy.
- 3.31 There must be a clear commitment to actively engage with affected communities at all stages, including the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy. The Equality Commission’s Guiding Principles on Consultation, as contained in Section 2 of the *Guide to the Statutory Duties*, must be followed, and equality scheme commitments complied with. The Equality Commission is also developing guidance on consultation with children and young people.
- 3.32 It is important that the process of consultation is not a paper exercise, that is perceived to have little meaningful value. Consultees need to know that their involvement has been influential and not merely tokenistic.
- 3.33 Public authorities need to build effective working relationships, and work in partnership with communities affected by the strategy. Analysis of public authorities’ five-year reviews of equality schemes, found that the most successful consultation exercises, for example with high levels of engagement, were events organised in partnership with voluntary and community groups, particularly when staff met with people in their own venues.

## Communication

- 3.34 As stated in paragraphs 2.14 – 2.20, there needs to be effective communication of the organisation's commitment to the promotion of good relations and of its strategy, as well as its progress on actions, and achieving tangible outcomes. Communication builds confidence and keeps people informed. It also enhances the image of the public authority as an organisation which is being proactive and showing visible leadership. A consistent message contributes to changing wider attitudes.
- 3.35 The Equality Commission **recommends** both external and internal communication of the draft and final good relations strategy, of the action plan and of individual initiatives; including making the strategy and action plan available on the organisation's web site and intranet, where they exist.
- 3.36 External communication can take the form of a launch, use of the media, newsletters, public statements, speeches, and press releases etc. Internal communication can include the use of staff briefings, the internet, intranet, staff and sectoral magazines, newsletters and so on. It would also include referring to and promoting the strategy, action plan and individual initiatives in business plans, meetings, staff reviews and appraisals, etc.
- 3.37 Consideration could also be given to the development and adoption of a logo or slogan, which can be used on correspondence, presentations and publications (including electronic media).

## Audits

- 3.38 Many organisations have found conducting external or internal good relations **audits**, or both, to be a useful starting point in developing an action plan. Audits, in this context, are any method of systematic review which help to determine the **existing state of relationships** internally, or with customers and stakeholders, and/or to identify what current or existing work promotes good relations. They enable an organisation to identify where there is potential for further or better promotion, and therefore to identify key areas or policies for strategic action.

- 3.39 Some organisations have audited their current functions, policies and procedures in order to determine the key areas with the **greatest potential** for promoting good relations (and also those which have a negative impact on relations which could be improved with mitigating measures or alternative policies).
- 3.40 A useful starting point is for public authorities to consider the list of functions included in their approved equality scheme, and examine the potential for promoting good relations against each of these, to assess whether the carrying out of each of these functions has an impact on good relations with regard to customers, stakeholders, employees and in the wider context of Northern Ireland. It will be necessary to break functions down into their component parts and policies, to the level of action each requires. A list of areas that can be addressed can then be drawn up with a view to assessing how current implementation can be changed to better promote good relations. These can then be prioritised to form the basis of an action plan for promoting good relations.
- 3.41 Information from screening exercises and equality impact assessments, particularly from consultations on these, may provide a substantial amount of relevant information. It is **recommended** that **all policies** are screened for good relations impacts and promotional opportunities, and public authorities may wish to consider repeating previous screening exercises if originally less attention may have been given to good relations considerations, than to impact on equality of opportunity.
- 3.42 Audits may also take the form of attitude surveys amongst staff, service users and other stakeholders, which can identify issues and concerns amongst individuals and groups of people which impact on relationships.

### Example

In November 2004, Derry City Council announced the commissioning of an internal audit of good relations and, based on that audit, the identification of areas for action.

## Example

Armagh City and District Council established a working group, involving officers from a cross section of Council Departments (including the Community Relations Officers), to decide on a research protocol for the development of a Good Relations Strategy.

The methodology used included desk top research, questionnaire and focus groups. The questionnaire was designed to include six areas namely; community involvement, religion, political opinion, race, disability and sexual orientation. The personal data section requested details along the Section 75 categories. Two thousand questionnaires were sent on a random basis throughout the City and District with over 400 responses, and the results analysed by the Diversity & Equality Manager. From these findings, focus groups were facilitated by a firm of independent consultants. These involved public meetings and targeted consultations with 'hard to reach groups'. Focus groups were also held with Councillors and staff. The combined research has illustrated the wide 'diversity' within the City and District as well as highlighting the many positive and negative aspects of Good Relations throughout the area.

## Action measures

- 3.43 Action plans should include specific measures accompanied by targets for completion or review, which the public authority commits to undertake. These can include measures which public authorities initiate, sponsor, participate in, encourage or facilitate, and can be internal or external, or both. Practical examples of action measures initiated and implemented by a variety of public authorities are included in Annex 1. Screening and impact assessment of policies which are relevant to the promotion or maintenance of good relations should be included as specific actions in plans and timetables.
- 3.44 Government departments and relevant public authorities which have a specific contribution or role under *A Shared Future* and its Triennial Action Plan, or the *Racial Equality Strategy* and its action plan, may wish to consider actions undertaken as part of those strategies to inform its future direction and priorities in promoting good relations. There should be clarity and coherence when reporting on Section 75 (2) and under *A Shared Future* action plans.

- 3.45 Some public authorities' functions are designed to promote good relations, such as Community Relations Programmes, or the District Council Good Relations Challenge Programmes proposed under *A Shared Future*<sup>28</sup>; the implementation of initiatives funded by the EU Peace programmes; or the provision of grant aid in areas such as community development, peace and reconciliation, capacity building, advice and advocacy work. These measures contribute to the promotion of good relations and therefore to the implementation of the good relations duty. They may be included in good relations strategies and action plans, and should be reported upon in progress and planning review reports; as well as in Section 75 annual progress reports to the Equality Commission.
- 3.46 Public authorities also promote good relations as a by-product of other activities. Health Action Zones (HAZ), for example, bring people together in a common cause, and such positive interaction breaks down barriers and encourages better relations. The lessons which can be learned from these other initiatives can read across and/or enrich good relations work. If included in good relations strategies and action plans, the good relations objectives of such measures should be identified and reported upon.

### **Example**

In the Northern Health and Social Services Board area, eleven Northern Neighbourhood Health Action Zone (NNHAZ) communities were represented at an innovative 'Community Cohesion' residential held in Coleraine in February 2006. Over 30 delegates attended the new training programme developed and delivered by the Northern Ireland Tenants Action Project (NITAP). The 'Community Cohesion' course is accredited by the Open College Network at Level 1 and this is the first time the course has been delivered in Northern Ireland. The two day residential course highlighted the importance of promoting community cohesion through individuals, organisations and local committees.

Participants were provided with the opportunity to learn a range of new skills, discuss issues around discrimination and explore a host of issues to promote cohesion within communities. It gave the participants an opportunity to work with people from different HAZ communities and to share their experiences and knowledge.

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<sup>28</sup> [www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk](http://www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk).

## Building a good and harmonious working environment

- 3.47 In addition to promoting good relations in the community, public authorities should consider what steps they can take to promote good relations within the workplace. Public authorities should take steps to build an equality culture and create a good and harmonious workplace environment free from harassment and intimidation in which all employees are treated with dignity and respect. There are a number of practices and procedures which public authorities, as employers, should have in place in order to eliminate religious, political and racial discrimination; for example, the effective implementation of equal opportunities and harassment policies and procedures which deal appropriately with sectarian and racist behaviour in the workplace.
- 3.48 The promotion of fair participation through affirmative action programmes has led to an increase in integrated workplaces. Research has shown that people who have opportunities to meet others from different backgrounds are more likely to have friends (as opposed to colleagues or acquaintances) from different religions and ethnic groups.<sup>29</sup> *A Shared Future* identifies the development of shared workplaces and good relations in the workplace as one of its strategic priorities.

## Training

- 3.49 Training for employees is one of the most important initiatives that public authorities can take to facilitate the promotion of good relations. Training ensures that employees are fully aware, and informed, of what is expected of them, and it also contributes to individual personal growth, awareness of the need to secure equal citizenship, and the benefits of a more open, diverse and intercultural society. The Commission **recommends** that all training on screening and equality impact assessment should include information on the good relations duty and its legal status effectively communicated.
- 3.50 It is recommended that public authorities ensure that senior level policy and decision-makers are fully aware of the legislative requirement to promote good relations and of the work and progress to which the organisation has committed. Board members and elected officers should likewise be fully briefed in the organisation's responsibilities and regularly updated on action and progress.

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<sup>29</sup> Dickson and Hargie. Relational Communication between Catholics and Protestants in the Workplace; Osborne and Shuttleworth, Fair Employment: A Generation On, ARK Research Update 43; CRE research.

3.51 It is also particularly important that members of recruitment and selection panels, personnel staff, managers, supervisors, and front line staff receive training. Good relations affects, as well as being promoted by, every individual in an organisation. The quality of internal relationships is an essential building block to the delivery of an effective public service.

3.52 Training in good relations issues for all staff is therefore **recommended**, and should include the following:

- The legislative and policy context, as outlined in Chapter 1.
- A public authority's equality scheme and good relations strategy.
- Relevant equality legislation and Codes of Practice (including FETO, RRO and the Fair Employment and Racial Equality Codes of Practice).
- Prejudice reduction training (sectarianism and racism).
- Cultural / religious diversity awareness training (this is often most effectively delivered by people from the affected groups).

The level of detail included in training may be tailored to suit the needs of the employees attending. However, training need not only take the form of formal sessions or courses; the continual provision of information and communication of sustained commitment is also very important.

3.53 Those providing prejudice reduction training, and often also cultural and religious diversity training, should themselves have been trained in responding to sensitive and contentious issues which may be raised in the course of training.

### **Example**

The Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC) has piloted an accredited 'training for trainers' course as part of the AGREE Programme (Actioning Good Relations, Equity and Equality), designed and delivered by Trademark. This course, accredited through the NI Open College Network at level 3, aims to build capacity within public sector organisations to deliver the required knowledge and skills based training under Section 75 (1) and (2).

### Example

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive appointed two race relations training officers to design and deliver accredited 'intercultural awareness' training to its staff. It has also worked in partnership with the Northern Ireland Tenants Action Project to provide accredited Community Cohesion training to Community Associations.

### Example

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has developed training which covers the implications of Section 75, both internally and in relation to service delivery initiatives. Specific training initiatives included Community Relationships, run jointly with Mediation Northern Ireland which focuses on community relations and promoting good relations between people of different religious beliefs and political opinion. The Community Relations Council funded the 'Living with Diversity' programmes which considered diversity, identity and conflict between the main communities in Northern Ireland. Alongside the training, a guide to culture and diversity was issued to staff in October 2004 and placed on the PSNI Intranet.

## Monitoring and evaluation

- 3.54 In considering methods of monitoring and evaluating good relations actions, account should be taken of the Equality Commission's *Section 75 Monitoring Guidance for use by Public Authorities*, which includes monitoring advice on the good relations duty.
- 3.55 Like every action that a public authority takes, measures and initiatives undertaken to promote good relations must be monitored, evaluated and reviewed. The aims and objectives of an action or measure which are identified as part of its development should form the basis for its monitoring and evaluation.
- 3.56 Both the impact of an initiative, and the degree to which the objectives have been met, should be part of this process, and feedback from the evaluation of a policy in practice should inform its review and redesign. If it has not been as successful as was anticipated, further action or change to the initiative should be considered.

- 3.57 Action taken in pursuit of a good relations strategy and action plan will result in a series of outputs (for example, the creation of a Forum, undertaking a good relations training programme for staff, awareness-raising seminars / workshops or campaigns). Although it is important to monitor progress on achieving such outputs, it is vital that there is also focus on the **outcomes** of such measures (for example, the degree to which attitudes have changed, relationships have improved etc.)
- 3.58 It is particularly important therefore that there is a focus on **impact and outcomes** rather than simply outputs. Public authorities should therefore consider:
- the likely outcome or impact the measure will have on promoting good relations;
  - what monitoring information they need to collect in order to evaluate whether the outcome has been achieved; and
  - once the measure has been taken, the degree to which that outcome was achieved.
- 3.59 There can be a range of outcomes depending on the type of measures taken. Outcomes will vary depending on the good relations strategy and action plan, but could, for example, include:
- A decrease in complaints of sectarianism / racism in the workplace or of sectarian / racist incidents in the local community.
  - An increase in awareness and understanding of cultural diversity.
  - A reduction of tension and greater co-operation between different communities at interface areas.
  - An agreement about the display of flags and emblems in public spaces.
  - The development of 'shared places' used by all members of the communities.
  - Increased contact among single-identity and voluntary and community groups.
  - Increased participation of members of the BME community in community groups and public authority planning sessions.
- The growth of relationships in the workplace that seek to promote respect, equity and trust and embrace diversity.
- 3.60 Public authorities may undertake a range of qualitative monitoring techniques in order to measure progress towards defined outcomes. For example, they may decide to commission surveys to determine

attitudes to specific issues, either amongst employees or in the wider community, or use information gathered by research organisations, such as data contained in the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey. Internal and external audits of attitudes to good relations conducted by public authorities as part of the development of good relations strategies and action plans will obviously be relevant and can be used to set baseline indicators. It may also be appropriate for a public authority to commission research in partnership with other bodies.

- 3.61 Initiatives designed to promote shared service delivery, by improving take-up by a particular community, for example, should be amenable to quantitative measurement. This will generally be related to the information which prompted the action – for example, that underuse had been identified through user or customer satisfaction surveys. The most useful information in this regard will be statistical – the number of people from different community backgrounds or racial groups who make enquiries or avail of services (including advice services, employment, grant applications and awards, etc). This may lead to research on potential barriers and on measures that would reduce them or encourage a group of people to take up the service or facility.
- 3.62 The Equality Commission recognises that certain types of outcomes may be difficult to evaluate. It can be difficult to assess if an initiative or work programme has had a direct impact on improving relationships, or how other factors, such as changes in the political environment, have had an influence. Measuring changes or improvement in relations is not easy, involving as it does changing hearts and minds, nor does the Equality Commission expect each public authority to independently assess the state of good relations in Northern Ireland.
- 3.63 Although the focus should be on outcomes, there is also a need to monitor that actions committed to are taken. This can include monitoring and reporting on numbers of employees and others who have received training (and the effectiveness of that training); the frequency of press releases and speeches referring to good relations; good relations events which have taken place; numbers of complaints received or incidents responded to indicating bad relations, and measurement of other actions included in their agreed strategy. It is important to recognise that several measures in an action plan can lead to the same outcome.

- 3.64 It should be noted that the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister has developed high level indicators for monitoring outcomes of *A Shared Future* and the *Racial Equality Strategy* and is reviewing the collection of monitoring data in relation to those indicators.

## Reporting

- 3.65 Public authorities are required to detail their actions, planned and taken, and report on progress made, in their annual progress report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of Section 75 (2). The *Guide to the Statutory Duties*<sup>30</sup> states that a ‘formal report of progress should be included in the authority’s annual report or review.’
- 3.66 To demonstrate that the consideration of promoting good relations has been mainstreamed, public authorities should record how good relations has been assessed in the development and review of policies (screening and impact assessments are useful tools in this regard), including the identification of mitigations and alternative policies, and taking account of consultations in decision making processes.
- 3.67 Annual reporting on the implementation of promoting good relations not only communicates compliance with the statutory duty to the Equality Commission, to stakeholders and to the management board, it also provides a useful regular review point at which to assess the extent and effectiveness of activity and progress, and to identify further opportunities for action.
- 3.68 It is important, when reporting, to identify and acknowledge all of the work that the authority carries out which promotes and contributes to good relations in Northern Ireland. As is evident from the examples of good practice given in this guidance, good relations work can include work undertaken to meet other objectives (such as Health Action Zones or the events which bring people together), as well as measures specifically identified under Section 75 (2).
- 3.69 It is also useful to include information about future planned actions or next steps, but if these are described in an annual progress report, progress or reasons for change in plans should be reported in the following year.

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<sup>30</sup> Guide to the Statutory Duties, Section 4, paragraph 2 (a).

3.70 To demonstrate compliance with Section 75 (2), reporting should be in relation to initiatives and measures taken to promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group. As stated in Chapter 3, the Equality Commission supports the promotion of good relations between members of other Section 75 categories, for example in relation to addressing homophobia, although public authorities are not required under Section 75 (2) to do so.

# Chapter 4 – Role of the Equality Commission

## Duties

- 4.1 Under Schedule 9(1) of the **Northern Ireland Act 1998**, the Equality Commission has a duty to:
- (a) keep under review the effectiveness of the duties imposed by Section 75;
  - (b) offer advice to public authorities and others in connection with those duties; and
  - (c) carry out the functions conferred on it by Schedule 9.

## Complaints and investigations

- 4.2 Under Schedule 9, paragraphs (10) and (11), the Equality Commission has the power to investigate complaints, and to initiate investigations in respect of a failure to comply with an equality scheme.

## Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997

- 4.3 Article 42 of the **Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997** (as amended) (RRO) places duties on the Equality Commission:
- (a) to work towards the elimination of discrimination;
  - (b) to promote equality of opportunity, and good relations between people of different racial groups; and
  - (c) keep the legislation under review.

## Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998

- 4.4 Under Article 7 of the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998 (as amended) (FETO), there is a duty on the Equality Commission to:
- (a) to promote equality of opportunity;
  - (b) to promote affirmative action;
  - (c) to work for the elimination of unlawful discrimination; and
  - (d) keep the legislation under review.

## Information, advice and training

- 4.5 Information and practical guidance on implementing the good relations duty (including advice on consultation, screening and impact assessment), is available from the Equality Commission. Public authorities can also obtain information and advice on their responsibilities under the fair employment and race equality legislation; including information on measures they can take to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of religious belief, political opinion or racial grounds. In addition, guidance is also available on how public authorities, as employers, can promote a good and harmonious work environment as recommended in the *Fair Employment Code of Practice*.
- 4.6 The Commission provides a telephone advisory service and produces a range of advisory publications (including the *Guide to the Statutory Duties*, the *Fair Employment Code of Practice*, *Race Equality Code of Practice*, *Audit of Progress on the Good Relations Duty 2000-2003*, and *Good Relations in Practice: A Report of Progress on the Good Relations Duty 2003-2005*) which can be obtained free of charge from the Commission, or downloaded from its website ([www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)). The Commission also provides free and confidential training on the equality legislation.

# Annex 1

## Case Studies and Examples of Good Practice

### Introduction

This Annex outlines in detail case studies of three public authorities from different sectors who have shown a clear commitment to the promotion of good relations within the context of their own particular functions, remit and circumstances. By implementing a range of innovative measures, they have demonstrated a desire to go beyond mere compliance with equality and good relations duties under Section 75 and placed both equality of opportunity and good relations at the heart of their public policy decision making.

The case studies are followed by a number of examples of good practice from across the public sector in Northern Ireland. Further examples of implementation of the Section 75 (2) good relations duty are available in the Equality Commission's publications *Audit of Progress on the Good Relations Duty 2000-2003*, and *Good Relations in Practice: A Report of Progress on the Good Relations Duty 2003-2005*.

As mentioned above the measures taken reflect the unique functions remit and circumstances of each of the three individual authorities. Therefore not all of the measures outlined will be appropriate to every public authority. Each public authority should assess, (when having regard to the desirability of promoting good relations), in light of its own particular functions, powers and duties and circumstances, which measures are most appropriate and effective in promoting good relations.

## Case Studies

### Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC)

In response to the requirements of Section 75, the 16 colleges of further and higher education have adopted a co-ordinated approach. One central body, the Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC) provided each college with a common approach to organizational change, a strategy and a training package as well as pro forma responses for the colleges' annual reports to the Equality Commission.

#### The AGREE Programme

The **A.G.R.E.E Programme** (Actioning Good Relations, Equality and Equity) was a four year strategy (2002 – 2006), funded by the Community Relations Council, and developed by Trademark in partnership with ANIC, which sought to ensure that equity and respect for difference are placed at the heart of day-to-day life in further education colleges in Northern Ireland.

ANIC was established in 1998 following the incorporation of the Colleges of Further Education in Northern Ireland. It is a limited company with charitable status. The Board of Directors represents the Association's memberships and comprises Directors of Institutions and Chairs of Governors.

The ANIC Equality Policy and Research Unit was introduced in March 2002 to assist colleges in meeting the provisions of Section 75 and other equality legislation, and in aiding colleges to comply with this process through a co-ordinated approach.

#### PROJECT AIMS:

The aims of the AGREE programme were as follows:-

- to ensure that equity and respect for difference are placed at the heart of the college's structures, systems and cultures;
- to go beyond complying with legislation by ensuring organisational commitment to mainstreaming the principles and practices of equity, diversity and interdependence through a process of organisational change;

- to develop/implement “an inclusive and innovative change programme” which will look at how the FE sector might more fully engage with s 75 considerations; and to model approaches which will allow for the mainstreaming of same over time; and
- to assist colleges to implement the seven steps of organisational change:
  - 1) Invitation.
  - 2) To establish critical dialogue.
  - 3) To growing leadership commitment and understanding.
  - 4) To identify the issues.
  - 5) Growing commitment and understanding across the wider organisation.
  - 6) Experimenting and modelling of new working practices.
  - 7) Implementing new models of practice into mainstream structures and relationships.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The AGREE programme had the following objectives which were met:-

### Step 1:

To establish a Project Working Group (to agree a plan of work for Year 1).

### Step 2:

To establish a Development Group which is representative of all current college structures (x24 Members involved in real dialogue about issues of conflict and division).

To establish a Community Education Forum (x16 Members involved in dialogue).

### Step 3:

To bring both the formal and informal leadership into new conversations around the principles of fairness and valuing difference (x24 Members of Development Group, x16 Members of Equality Forum, x16 Community Education Forum Members, x16 Board of Directors, x16 Governors, x16 Trade Union Members, x16 Student Executives, x4 Working Group Members).

To recruit (over x6 days) and train a cohort of tutor/facilitators to undertake the preparation, strategic planning, deliver and evaluation of appropriate training course in relation to s 75 (1) & (2) (x16 College representatives).

To develop and deliver an accredited OCN training course on “Equality & Good Relations” – suggested modules: Equality Legislation, Understanding Equity, Diversity and Interdependence, Anti-sectarianism, Anti-racism, Strategic Planning and Programme Design, Delivery and Evaluation.

**Step 4:**

To carry out an audit of programmes and activities (relating to issues of community relations, peace building and ED & I across the FE & H sector over x5 days).

To carry out a number of baseline scoping studies and action research into ‘organisational culture’.

To produce accompanying materials.

**Step 5:**

To engage with the various inter-college groups and structures and deliver a programme of dialogue.

To assist in the development of a training strategy for the colleges (senior staff, student representatives and others from the FE sector) to meet requirements under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

To develop plans to implement a framework of organisational change based on the inclusive principles of equity, diversity and interdependence.

**Step 6:**

To experiment with, and model, new working practices, policies, structures and support mechanisms.

**Step 7:**

To implement new models of practice into mainstream structures and relationships.

A key objective was to provide mechanisms and methodologies which will allow community relations/considerations to become a self-renewing/sustaining feature of further education in NI.

**PROJECT OUTCOMES:**

Outlined below are the outcomes of the programme:

- The establishment of new structures within colleges to deal with equality specifically, e.g. College Equality Working Groups.
- The recruitment and development of Equality Trainers.
- Development and delivery of OCN accredited programme “Equality and Good Relations Trainers Programme” to college staff. This programme was further developed by Trademark and delivered to other public sector bodies.
- The delivery of general awareness training.
- The identification of equality issues within individual colleges.
- The development of training materials.
- Sharing and development of good practice and equality initiatives through the establishment of equality structures.
- Cultural diversity and good relations are now included as elements of student induction and in some student curriculums.
- Growing confidence, knowledge and experience within further education to allow for the continuation of steps taken through the AGREE Programme.

Throughout the life of the programme, colleges were provided with opportunities to build capacity, and to challenge and overcome the politeness and denial that characterises individual and organisational approaches to the fundamental divisions that exist within this society, and the increasing demands faced in dealing with an endemic and increasingly active racism.

Through the various strands of the programme this project has directly intervened in the political and cultural life of the colleges, in an attempt to bring the development of positive community relationships from the periphery to the mainstream of organisational policy and practice.

A cumulative total of 2797 participants were involved in the various activities during the three year programme. Activities included:

- Equality and good relations awareness training.
- Training & support for college equality working groups.
- Research interviews.

- Student workshops/ training.
- Residential.
- Consultation regarding relevant college equality issues.
- Anti-harassment training.
- Staff surveys.
- Policy development.

## Cultural Diversity Projects

In addition to the AGREE Programme in 2003, the Department for Employment and Learning provided financial support totalling £150,000 (£50,000 per pilot) for three Cultural Diversity pilot projects, which were completed in March 2005. The purpose of supporting the pilots was primarily to promote “Cultural Diversity / Good Relations” in the Northern Ireland further education (FE) sector, by providing opportunities for students and staff from differing identities, backgrounds and traditions to develop and enhance relationships of trust and understanding, and promote mutual respect in every aspect of college life. The four colleges involved were Armagh College, Belfast Institute, North West Institute and Upper Bann Institute.

## Next Steps - Dissemination Programme

Following completion of the pilots, the Department has decided to provide financial support to the six new area based Colleges to facilitate the dissemination and roll out of Cultural Diversity/Good Relations best practice identified by:

- the Education and Training Inspectorate, in their report on the above Cultural Diversity Pilot Initiatives; and
- MORI Ireland/ Deloitte, in their “Chill Factor” FE research project, commissioned by ANIC.

A total of £300,000 has been made available for this purpose between November 2006 -07.

Whilst each dissemination programme is specific to the local context, generic activities include:

- the collation and analysis of data on potential and actual learners from minority ethnic groups;

- the development and introduction of codes of good practice for staff and students in relation to cultural diversity;
- the engagement of students and representatives from groups reflecting a wide range of cultures and traditions in the development of whole-college policies on good relations;
- the introduction of induction programmes for students and staff, focused on cultural diversity;
- the completion of a full curriculum audit to identify where formal cultural diversity activities are integrated effectively into the curriculum, and to incorporate issues of cultural diversity and equal opportunity into quality assurance and course review processes; and
- the review of marketing and promotional materials, including prospectuses, to ensure that they portray, and are effective in recruiting, a diverse group of students.

ANIC is also currently undertaking research, funded by the Department for Employment and Learning, into racism in further education. Findings were due in October 2007. In addition, ANIC are developing a race equality plan in partnership with colleges and in conjunction with the Equality Commission.

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## The Royal Hospitals

The Royal Hospitals has developed and implemented a programme of work to promote good relations. The programme operates along four strands, with the theme of 'Action in Partnership' running through each.

### Strand 1: Employees

The Royal Hospitals made the commitment to the promotion of good relations in its annual management plan. The work is overseen by the Royal Equality Steering Group, chaired by the Chief Executive. A Good Relations Working Group comprising of management and trade unions was established to take the issue forward. It was agreed that a good relations audit of the organisation would be carried out. Advice was sought from the Futureways Unit at the University of Ulster and the Community Relations Council. An

audit was carried out and a series of staff and trade union dialogue groups were held. The focus was on good relations in the workplace. A range of work was carried out as a result of this joint project. This work has included:

1. The development and implementation of a “Working Well Together” policy by management and trade unions. This policy recognises that all staff must accept that as individuals they have differences and they can create the possibility of Working Well Together in a harmonious environment that is characterised by fair treatment. This is essential to the well-being of all employees, patients and service users. It states that a harmonious environment free from conflict is something for which all staff have responsibility. It highlights the importance of respect, dignity and positive interpersonal behaviour and the role of trade unions in developing this in partnership. This policy is used as a basis for good relations in the workplace along with the Joint Declaration of Protection.
2. The establishment of an Equal Opportunities Joint Forum, where staff and trade union representatives discuss issues impacting on equal opportunities and good relations and devise new policies.
3. A Staff Diversity Group where staff and trade union representatives address issues of racial harassment occurring inside and outside the Trust and promote sources of support through the Royal magazine, intranet and other media.
4. Staff training on equal opportunities (compulsory for staff every three years), good relations and working well together. This training is evaluated for effectiveness.
5. The launch of a Good Relations Statement in March 2005 by the Eastern Area Best Practice Forum, of which the Royal Hospitals is a member.

## **Strand 2: Ethnic Minority Groups**

The Royal Hospitals conducted a 3 year project aimed at improving health and developing awareness of the Irish Traveller Community among Royal Hospitals staff. The project included an accredited course for eight Traveller women on health issues and services. A Traveller Health Needs assessment was carried out to assess the health needs of the Traveller Community and a staff survey was conducted to identify training and information needs. These surveys identified a need to facilitate dialogue about services between Travellers and hospital staff outside health crisis situations. A series of 10

visits were planned and carried out to key service areas to allow a two-way exchange of information between Travellers and hospital staff. Visits were structured to show the “journey” patients and staff go on when someone attends the service. The visits aimed to improve understanding and promote good relations. Feedback was obtained from Traveller participants through semi-structured interviews and was very positive. One participant said: “We finally got to see what goes on behind the closed doors and why.” Hospital staff have also undertaken further training on Traveller Culture. Feedback on this strand was obtained via surveys and was very positive. Formal evaluation of the programme is planned to report in 2007.

Royal Hospitals’ staff from ethnic minority backgrounds have contributed to initiatives promoting good relations in partnership with trade unions and community groups. This has included giving talks at events in the Department of Health, the Eastern Health & Social Services Board and Belfast City Council. More locally, staff have given talks in local schools, community centres and women’s groups. Local communities have taken an active role in tackling racism in the West Belfast area and held a conference on tackling racism. Royal Hospitals ran a workshop for the local community entitled “Overseas Staff at the Royal – Facts and Fiction” to dispel myths about overseas staff. This workshop was very well received and has led to further partnership work on racism with local communities, including a Belfast wide anti-racism conference. Royal Hospitals’ staff participated in training on cultural diversity in partnership with ethnic minority sector organisations, which has been mainstreamed within its “Learning for Excellence” corporate training brochure.

In 2005-2006, over 230 employees attended training specifically on cultural diversity within The Royal Hospitals, while 1587 employees attended training on a range of diversity and equality issues during the same period. 99% of participants evaluated the training as either good or very good.

### **Strand 3: Communities**

A number of projects going on within the Royal Hospitals have had good relations elements built into them. These included a cross-community playtherapy project involving staff, children and parents from two childcare centres and two schools (one Protestant and one Catholic) located in South and West Belfast. Staff from the two centres came together on the Royal site for an eight week training course on how to develop skills in therapeutic play. Visits to the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children were included in the project for the childcare staff and parents. Good relations was a theme

built into the project by the joint community – hospital steering group as despite providing similar services, these childcare staff had never worked or trained together before.

## Evaluation of Programme

Measures were established to develop an evaluation framework for the project elements.

| Project Element         | Baseline  | Mid-Point   | End   |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|
| Staff training course   | Baseline Survey<br>Staff meetings<br>Assessment of training & development needs<br>Site visits to centres | Mid-point survey<br>Weekly feedback on benefits of equipment<br>“lending library” | Post-project evaluation survey<br>Interviews with childcare centre managers |
| Parents training course | Baseline Survey<br>Informal meetings  | Evaluation surveys  | Evaluation surveys<br>Interviews with childcare centre managers             |
| Hospital Visits         | Baseline Survey   | Evaluation surveys  | Evaluation survey   |
| School Sessions         | Baseline interviews with teachers in both schools<br>Identification of participants by teachers           | Records kept of child’s progress by teachers<br>Weekly feedback from teachers     | Post project evaluation interviews with teachers                            |

Measures for evaluating the good relations aspects of the project were built into the overall evaluation. Baseline, mid-point and post-project surveys and interviews were carried out. Over two-thirds of participants stated in evaluation that doing the course with staff from another community centre was beneficial. All participants rated the visits to the Children’s Hospital as beneficial; over half the participants had never visited the hospital before.

This project was highly commended as good practice in Corporate Social Responsibility by the Belfast Telegraph Business Awards in April 2005. It was also commended by Business in the Community in their Healthy Communities Awards. A video presentation of this project was made to senior staff within the Royal Hospitals highlighting the benefits to a range of groups.

The Royal Hospitals organised two information days which took place in May

2005 in the Sandy Row and Donegall Road areas. The days were planned in partnership with Belfast City Council Community Development Workers and South Belfast Highway to Health. The aim of the events was to introduce services and employment opportunities at the Royal Hospitals to communities who may not have been aware of them. The Royal Hospitals aims to increase employment of members of the Protestant community in a range of departments. Royal Jubilee Maternity Service, Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children Play Department, Health Promotion and the Human Resources Department held information workshops.

Current job vacancies were advertised along with application forms. Both information days were evaluated using questionnaires. 59% of participants at both sessions said they would be interested in employment at the Royal Hospitals (this figure was 80% at the Donegall Road event). Respondents were asked if the information day had influenced their outlook on the Royal Hospitals and its services. 100% of respondents at both events replied “Yes”. Respondents were asked if their view of the Royal Hospitals was more positive, more negative or had not changed. 86% of participants at both events stated that their view of the Royal Hospitals was more positive, 7% had no change and 3% stated more negative. 65% of respondents said they would be interested in participating in future consultations on services and issues at the Royal Hospitals.

## **Strand 4: Regional**

The Royal Hospitals has benefited from being part of the City Bridges Trade Union Good Relations project. This has facilitated partnerships between The Royal and Letterkenny General Hospital with exchange visits of staff side and management side employees to discuss good relations issues. This involved Royal Hospitals staff speaking at a conference on Good Relations in the Workplace hosted by City Bridges.

The Royal has also had working relationships with Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, Mayo General Hospital and Bradford Royal Infirmary, where good relations has been a theme. The Royal Hospitals is a member of the Eastern Area Best Practice Sub-Group on Good Relations and meets with partners to discuss the issue including Community Relations Council, Counteract and Trademark. A seminar on good relations was hosted by the Eastern Health and Social Services Board in which the Royal Hospitals participated.

# Newry and Mourne District Council

## Council Context

Newry and Mourne District Council is the fourth largest Council in Northern Ireland with a population in excess of 90,000 people.

It has three quite distinct areas: Newry City, South Armagh and the Mournes. Each of these areas has quite distinct cultures and identities.

Given the considerable geographic spread of the communities and the land mass of the Mourne Mountains, there has been a tendency for communities within the district to develop separately from one another adding the perception of remoteness felt by some of the communities in the district.

The district as a whole is recognised as having developed significantly in economic and social terms in the past fifteen years, although as Noble indices indicate, there are still considerable pockets of severe multiple deprivation within the area.

## Community Relations

Community relations in Newry and Mourne District has evolved over a considerable period of time. Newry and Mourne District Council participated fully within the District Council Community Relations Programme and a core programme in the evolutionary process of good relations has been the Relationships in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence initiative (REDI).

## REDI

REDI (Relationships in Equity Diversity and Interdependence) was a pilot initiative which began in 1998. It was facilitated by two external partners, Future Ways, based at the University of Ulster, and Counteract, the anti-intimidation group set up by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

REDI centered upon mainstreaming community relations principles and had internal and external dimensions. It was about naming and dealing with the challenges that a local Council faces operating within a politically contested society, and focused upon how the Council acted as:

- a civic leader;
- an employer; and

- a deliverer of services.

In essence REDI was about learning the best ways for working and living together in the same place with different people. REDI integrated the two themes of community relations, and organisational change and learning through dealing with the issues of:

- **Equity** – making sure people from all parts of the community are treated fairly.
- **Diversity** – respecting and understanding of differences between people.
- **Interdependence** – recognising how decisions we take affect others, and how others' actions impact on us as people and as an organisation.

A scoping study resulted in the establishment of the following:

- REDI Development Group
  - Consisting of employees from all levels, elected representatives, trade unions, and management, all on an equal footing.
  - An informal space.
- Trade Union Working Group
  - Providing a direct voice in the process and legitimised their role as communication channels between the workforce and the Development Group.
- REDI Leadership Group
  - 12 employees - undertook 6-day training programme.
  - To increase knowledge and skills for those who were advocates of REDI.
  - Creating 'champions' who could influence the informal networks and relationships that shape the organisation.
- REDI Elected Representatives Group
  - All Councillors meeting on a quarterly basis to discuss issues relating to their role as civic leaders.
  - Facilitated by Dr Duncan Morrow.
  - No media presence allowed Councillors to engage fully in honest and frank dialogue.
- Community Relationships Forum
  - External dimension.
  - Facilitating community dialogue / discussion.
  - Brought together unionist, nationalist and republican stakeholders.

## Outputs / Successes of REDI

- Underpinned by the full support of the Clerk and Chief Executive  
To move Community Relations 'to the centre'.
- A Declaration of Principles
  - Agreed, supported and endorsed by the employees, elected representatives, trade unions and management within Newry and Mourne District Council.
- Creation of the Council's Equality Unit located within the Administration Department
  - Brought together Best Value, Community Relations, Equality, PR and Communication.
  - Places these issues strategically at the heart of service delivery, decision making and policy development.
- Anti-sectarian / Anti-harassment Training for all employees
  - Dignity at Work Policy.
  - Harassment Advisors.
- Training for Supervisors and Managers
- Diversity Training for all employees
- Greater consultation with employees and increased opportunities for employees, especially those in the minority group, to have a 'voice'
  - Employee Survey.
  - Open Spaces – participative consultation.
  - Equality Consultation process on policies.
  - Helping the Council be seen as one which 'listens and values' people's views.
- Greater input by employees into new policies and procedures
  - Participants in the REDI Development Group had the opportunity to think as 'leaders' not 'lowly workers'.
  - Building trust and helping employees understand they are valued members of Council whose input and contribution is valued.
- New thinking in terms of policy development and implementation
  - Family Friendly Policies.
  - Creation of a Corporate Press Office.

- New voluntary Contributions Application Process with proofing mechanism to create a strategically targeted and focused system.
- Increased communication between employees and management.
- The Council was ready and prepared to embrace new legislative requirements such as Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

## **Towards the future**

REDI had allowed space for a level of critical dialogue to develop and contributed towards building relationships in the workplace through defining a sense of ownership of the decision-making process across the organisation. Building on the success of REDI, the ongoing challenge for Newry and Mourne District Council as a civic leader was how it treats those who feel marginalized or excluded from the centre.

The Council acknowledged it needed to maintain momentum and commitment to the process whilst recognising the Council itself, is a transient structure with Councillors presenting themselves to the voters every four years. In this context, the dilemma for the political representatives was negotiating the party political function and their civic leadership role.

It was important to further integrate the principles of community relations through influencing decision makers in how they develop policy and deliver services. Therefore, the Council's policy should be both strategic and proactive in identifying and providing practical solutions to emerging problems.

## **Community Relations Audit**

In moving forward, the Council commissioned an independent review of the Council's Community Relations Programme.

A Community Relations Audit was undertaken in 2003 to examine the work undertaken within REDI, the emerging policy context and future implications for local government. The audit, undertaken in consultation with the community and Council, was the evolutionary pathway of definitively moving from the community relations to the good relations context.

The Community Relations Audit re-defined the Council's Community Relations Programme in the Newry and Mourne area as:

**‘enabling the continued development of an inclusive district through the building of good relations and trust thereby enabling mutual understanding and respect for the diverse cultures and heritages of the district’.**

In addition, the audit recommended Council should reconsider the allocation of staff resources, to reflect there are two distinct elements, internal and external, of the Community Relations programme in Newry and Mourne. It recommended the Council consider that the internal and external programmes be implemented by two separate staff members of equal grading, rather than the existing structure of having a Community Relations Officer and an Assistant.

This resulted in a restructuring of the Good Relations Section to have an Internal Good Relations Officer and External Good Relations Officer to assist with the mainstreaming of good relations both within and outside of Council. The Officers continued to be located at the heart of Council activity within the Equality Unit of the Administration Department.

The Good Relations Section operates primarily within the statutory duty of Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Progressing the good relations duty has required taking into consideration new policies and frameworks established by central government such as the ‘Racial Equality Strategy’ and ‘A Shared Future’. In addition, the Good Relations Section is preparing itself for the new Challenge Programme through the Community Relations Council, as opposed to the Community Relations Unit in OFMDFM, and the pending Review of Public Administration.

## **Good Relations Strategic Plan**

Newry and Mourne District Council’s Good Relations Strategic Plan has four aims:

- To encourage greater understanding within the community in Newry and Mourne.
- To enable the Council make decisions and deliver services recognizing the impact of its actions.
- To encourage the development of civic capacity.
- To continually improve the capacity of the Good Relations team to provide a quality service.

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Key elements of the Council's programme of work include:

## **1. The Good Relations Forum**

Newry and Mourne District Council is committed to facilitating and co-ordinating community discussion and dialogue. The Newry Good Relationships Forum, co-ordinated by the External Good Relations Officer, is widely regarded as a model of good practice both in Northern Ireland and also in Great Britain.

The aim of the Good Relations Forum is to positively contribute to good relations in Newry between people of different political, religious and ethnic background and improving relationships between Newry and other parts of the district of Newry and Mourne. This forum provides 'quiet' space for citizens of the Newry area to discuss, debate and challenge perceptions so enabling participants to improve understanding both their own and other participant's views on issues impacting upon the area.

The Forum, facilitated by Mediation Northern Ireland and Council Officers, involves a cross section of District Councillors, Officials of Newry and Mourne District Council and citizens of the Newry area.

During 2005, members of the Good Relations Forum participated in the three cities programme which included Newry, Belfast and Amsterdam. A field study trip to Amsterdam enabled members to see how others have addressed their issues of challenge. This helped to develop members capacity to consider local issues within a wider context and, through the sharing good practice, members have gained an ability to turn hindsight into foresight. This culminated in June 2006 with the 'Challenge of Change Convention', which was a three-day convention about diversity in a society still struggling with division. This was organised by Newry and Mourne District Council and Belfast City Council in association with Louth County Council, and facilitated by mediation Northern Ireland.

## **2 The Elected Members Forum**

This is co-ordinated by the Internal Good Relations Officer. Working in partnership with the Community Relations Council, it is facilitated by Dr Duncan Morrow and operates under Chatham House rules.

The aim of the Forum is to provide the elected representatives (Councillors) with an opportunity to engage in a facilitated discussion about good relations based issues outside of the Chamber with no press present. This allows for

meaningful engagement between the elected members, and also provides an opportunity to familiarise Members with current good relations legislation, policies and frameworks in terms of Newry and Mourne such as 'A Shared Future' and the 'Racial Equality Strategy'.

### **3. Good Relations Grant Programme**

The Good Relations Section has created a targeted and focused Good Relations Grant Scheme which has a clear evaluation process to identify benefits and outcomes of projects funded through the Good Relations budget.

The Good Relations Small Grants Scheme is administered through the External Good Relations Officer and is available for community groups throughout the District. It provides the community with the opportunity to receive funding for innovative Good Relations projects, which are single identity, cross community and cultural diversity.

Newry and Mourne District Council have also amended their Voluntary Contributions assessment process, and a project's impact in terms of promoting good relations is one of the ten criteria used when assessing applications seeking funding. In addition, members of the Equality Unit sit on the Assessment Team which evaluates all funding applications.

### **4. Work with ethnic minorities**

Newry and Mourne District Council has been proactive in hosting information evenings across the Council area. These information evenings, attended by elected members and representatives of local service providers, provide an opportunity for members of our BME community to meet decision-makers. The meet and greet sessions have included meeting with representatives of, and providing financial assistance for, the Newry Polish Resource Centre.

In addition the Council has produced a directory of local services including a breakdown of Council services in six different languages. An Anti-Racism project has also been undertaken in partnership with the SELB Youth Service with young people from the Newry area. The Council's Well Being Action Partnership have also secured funding for Policy and Project workers in the specific field of ethnic minorities.

## 5. Youth based activities

### **School Information Pack**

During 2003/2004 the Council produced a Teachers' Information Pack for Schools. This introduced young people to the Council, and the issues of citizenship, culture and diversity. The accompanying Work Pack was designed in conjunction with teachers, and the Council continues to also run events to complement the Pack to reinforce the meaning of diversity for the schoolchildren.

The Pack received an Opportunity Now Award in 2005 under the Good Relations category. The Pack, which is in loose-leaf format for updating, includes information on local history, culture, diversity, citizenship and the local environment. Each primary school in the Newry and Mourne area received a number of Packs with backup support service from the Equality Unit. Feedback from teachers has indicated they find it to be a useful tool which complements the young peoples' learning process.

### **Allsorts Project (2005/2006) and Photographic Youth Project (2006)**

Run by the Good Relations Section in conjunction with the Community Safety Partnership and Youth Service, involving the Bosco Youth Club and members of the Travelling Community, the Allsorts Project explored issues and personal experiences of prejudice and discrimination. The culmination of the project was the publication of a book by the young people. It is envisaged this initiative will be replicated across the Council area in the future.

The Photographic Youth Project was a youth initiative through the Good Relations Programme where twenty young people from across the Council area were asked to take photographs of issues of importance affecting them. The young people then presented this to Councillors.

### **Local Democracy Week**

In recognition of its civic leadership function, Newry and Mourne District Council takes an active role in promoting Local Democracy Week. This enables opportunities for meaningful engagement and valuable discussion between Councillors and young people through various projects such as the 'I'm a Councillor Get Me out of Here' project which was run in 2006.

## Youth Forum

At present, a Youth Forum is being developed in partnership with the SELB Youth Service for the whole of the District. Through the partnership approach participants are provided with the opportunity to engage in issues which are important to them in terms of their community and the services provided therein.

In addition to the activities above, the Good Relations Section continues to provide advice, support and training opportunities for employees, individuals, groups and organisations. Sharing of best practice within the community takes place through the External Good Relations Officer. This is through partnership working on various groups for example, Community Safety Partnership, Drugs and Alcohol Partnership.

Influencing policy and enabling informed decision-making remains a key cornerstone, and the Council's Good Relations Officers participate on numerous committees such as the St Patrick's Day Committee, Ulster Scots Committee, and projects delivered through Newry Museum, the Irish Language Section, Community Safety Partnership, Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership, Local Strategy Partnership and Community Services Section (Community Support Plan).

While Newry and Mourne District Council has provided examples of programmes of work, it should be acknowledged the programme is always work in progress. The Council believes that working to maintain sustainable relationships is the key principle underpinning civic society and initiatives centred around structured dialogue processes such as household panels, community forums and Councillor forums are pathways to this.

## Examples of Good Practice

Outlined below are examples of some measures taken by a range of public authorities to promote good relations, in the context of their own particular remit and functions.

### **Discussing contentious issues**

In July 2001 concerns were raised over the flying of flags across Ballymena Borough. Following approval from Ballymena Borough Council, Counteract, a mediation organisation set up to address sectarianism and conflict issues, was engaged to work with the Council in attempting to resolve this contentious and difficult issue. A Pilot Scheme was set up in the Fisherwick and Harryville areas in order to give residents an opportunity to discuss the medium to long term vision for the overall improvement of their areas, in addition to correct and influence external views of the Borough's image generally.

### **Development of a local area Good Relations Strategy**

Ballymena Borough Council, through its Good Relations Unit, facilitated the production of a Good Relations Strategy for the Dunclug Estate. The strategy addressed priority issues such as the display of flags and emblems and the image of the estate, and the relationships between different communities (including minority ethnic communities) and different community associations.

This initiative was developed out of a consultation process initiated in Dunclug by Ballymena Local Strategic Partnership. Three sub-groups were developed, including a Crime and Community Safety Sub-Group, which agreed in 2006 to conduct a survey, commissioned by the council, among a sample of residents within the estate in order to seek their views on a range of issues related to community relations in the area. The initiative had the full support of the Dunclug and District Residents' Association together with Dunclug Partnership and Ballymena Community Safety Partnership.

## **Inter-Ethnic Support Group and Forum**

As part of its Ethnic Minorities Project, launched in 2002, Ballymena Borough Council has facilitated an Inter-Ethnic Support Group and Forum aimed at organising a wide range of support services for its increasing minority ethnic population. The Council's aim is to empower people who are currently marginalised and bring an awareness of all cultural traditions into the mainstream of the Council's deliberations on the design and delivery of all its activities.

## **Ethnic Minorities Support Project**

Ballymoney Borough Council is implementing an Ethnic Minorities Support Project which is funded by OFMDFM Racial Equality Unit. The stated aim of the project is "to develop the capacity and increase the equality of opportunity of all ethnic minority communities in Ballymoney Borough". The project employs an Ethnic Minorities Support Worker to audit the needs of various minority communities and to develop capacity and build relationships with participant communities. The project works in partnership with other stakeholders, including the Council, to develop information on services available in the local area and to ensure that these services can be more easily accessed. It works with ethnic minority communities and the wider community, to promote cultural diversity and awareness, and supports needs within the Borough.

## **'Youth in Community' project**

Corrymeela Community's 'Youth in Community' project is a cutting edge programme of personal and social development enabling young adults (18-25) from highly marginalised areas to develop and facilitate their own modular community relations/good relations programmes. The project focuses on the Section 75 agenda, and is based on the principles of equity, diversity and interdependence. The project begins by focusing on each young adult's personal identity. This 'identity' module is integral and essential to the whole programme.

The project is funded by the Youth Education Social Inclusion Partnership (YESIP), a consortium of twelve partners from the Northern Ireland education sector, as part of the EU Peace II programme for peace and reconciliation.

## **Building relationships at an interface**

The Suffolk and Lenadoon Interface Group, which was funded by a number of sources, including the International Fund for Ireland, Community Relations Council, Belfast City Council, NIHE and Department for Social Development, was established in 1997 in order to build relationships between the two interface communities of Suffolk and Lenadoon in Belfast. They developed and implemented an agreed plan linked into key strategies, such as *A Shared Future* and the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, aimed at developing shared activities, shared spaces and shared services within the two communities. The Group received an award from the British Urban Regeneration Association in 2003 for best practice in community regeneration.

## **Collaboration and sharing good practice**

An education conference brought together senior personnel from the Community Relations Branch of the Department of Education, the five Education and Library Boards and the University of Ulster, with teachers from across Northern Ireland in a shared commitment to enhancing the effectiveness of Community Relations Education. The two-day event involved workshops, speakers, drama sessions, discussion groups and recommendations on the way forward. In evaluating the course participants said they had been “jolted out of their comfort zone, re-energised and had enjoyed the opportunity to share in the dissemination of good practice.”

## **Collaboration and sharing good practice**

A two day ‘Sharing Good Practice: Race, Equality and Diversity Regional Conference’ was run in partnership with six other councils, under the Regional Community Relations Officer Forum (Ballymoney, Limavady, Coleraine, Moyle, Londonderry and Magherafelt). The Conference focused on two inter-related themes; the first day examined the roles, responsibilities and capacity of the statutory and business sectors to work within a diverse society and address the issue of accessibility; the second day focused on sharing models of good practice. Workshops included education for diversity, community sector models which work well, diversity in communities, civic leadership, making the business case, migrant workers myth-busting and community safety.

## **Cultural awareness raising**

Belfast City Council have organised a range of cultural events aimed at encouraging understanding of and respect for different cultural expressions and needs. They have also funded a range of community relations cultural delivery projects, including the Irish Football Association's anti-racism and anti-sectarianism initiative.

## **Development of a Good Relations Plan**

Belfast City Council, as part of an initiative under *A Shared Future*, and in partnership with a number of public authorities (including NIHE, the Department for Social Development and the Health Trusts) has developed a Good Relations Plan for Belfast, with the aim of making Belfast a 'shared city'.

## **Working in partnership with the local community**

Craigavon and Banbridge HSS Trust launched a new mural at Russell Drive, Lurgan, one of the Trust's facilities, in June 2006. The mural, which depicts Lurgan Workhouse, is the result of a good relations initiative. The project involved partnership working between Mourneview and Grey Estate Community Association, Craigavon & Banbridge Community HSS Trust and Play Resource Centre, Belfast, and marked an agreement over the flying of flags, resulting in a reduction in the use of paramilitary flags and emblems in the Russell Drive area of Lurgan, and the removal of paramilitary murals from Trust property in the area. Plans for the future include the Trust funding of a mural in the interface area.

## **Reducing Tensions**

In partnership with organisations from the public and voluntary sectors, Craigavon Borough Council developed projects looking at cultural and identity issues within new areas. In particular, it worked with community groups during July and August 2005 aimed at reducing tension during this period. The Council awarded funding to the PLACE Initiative and Mourneview and Grey Estates Community Association for cultural activities leading up to the lighting of the bonfires in July. The groups liaised with various statutory bodies such as Council, NIHE and PSNI

and also with key influencers to ensure the events passed off peacefully. Particularly in the Portadown area, the group were able to affect change around illegal dumping, size and positioning of the bonfires and remove contentious slogans. They were also able to negotiate the timescale on the flying of flags in the area.

### **Cross border, cross community projects**

Since its inception in October 2003, the British Council's NcompasS programme has supported in excess of 2,500 young people and those who work with them in developing cross border, cross community exchanges. Activities ranged from Joint and Innovative Projects (52 projects) involving partners North and South, to Job Shadowing/Study Visits (3), and Student Placements (26 participants). Many of the groups which took part in NcompasS activities on a cross border, cross community basis did so for the first time. They appreciated the opportunity to learn about people and communities from different traditions. Participants' comments included: 'It opened my eyes to see how different people worked and it was interesting to explore misconceptions about each other', and 'the impact of the exchange on participants was very positive...the experience has increased their awareness of barriers to accepting others'.

### **Statement of Commitment**

In March 2005, the Eastern Area Best Practice Equality Forum (which comprises the Eastern Health and Social Services Board, Eastern Health and Social Services Council and Health and Social Services Trusts within the Eastern Board Area), launched a Statement of Commitment to Good Relations. The Forum followed this up with a scoping exercise to identify existing policies, procedures and good practice relating to good relations across the member organisations. The Forum also engaged with community relations / good relations specialists such as the Community Relations Council and Trademark to explore how to develop a good relations strategy. In view of the pending re-organisation of the HPSS under the Review of Public Administration, it was decided to hold a workshop to again raise the profile of good relations, to highlight the effects of sectarianism and racism and to include the Hate Crimes legislation. The workshop took place in June 2006, and included presentations of current examples of good practice initiatives which promote and support good relations within health and social care, and

also partnership working with other statutory organisations, given by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and Down & Lisburn Trust.

The Good Relations statement adopted by each Eastern Board Trust has been printed on to a freestanding banner and is displayed throughout each organisation at reception areas, at staff training sessions and public consultations events (the statement is given as an example of a vision statement at para. 3.28 above).

### **Attitude survey**

Conducted under the auspices of the ANIMATE Project, the Craigavon & Banbridge Community HSS Trust undertook a piece of research to assess attitudes and levels of prejudice of staff working in the public sector, including health and social services. Whilst the majority of Trust staff did not express prejudice against migrant workers, a sizeable minority of staff did articulate prejudicial and racist attitudes. The findings of this research will be used to inform future training interventions.

### **Good Relations Audit**

The Higher Education Equality Consortium (HEEC) consists of representatives from the University of Ulster, Queen's University Belfast, St Mary's University College, Stranmillis University College and the Open University. In 2005, the HEEC appointed a research assistant to conduct an extensive good relations audit in each university/college. Following extensive research into good relations, community relations, inter-group communication, diversity questionnaires and diversity culture audits (research methodology), wide-ranging consultation, and a pilot survey, the audit was conducted between September 2005 and December 2006.

The audit investigated the state of relations between those of different religious belief, political opinion and racial background. In particular, it focused on six key aspects of good relations within the university context: perceptions of current relations; perceptions of university/college environment; social interaction; diversity programmes; teaching and learning; and views on good relations.

The results of each audit were presented in individual reports for each consortium member, for general publication and dissemination. The recommendations from the audit will be used to inform general equality and good relations practices and developing good relations strategies at each member institution.

## **New Housing Development for Travellers**

In December 2003, the NI Housing Executive took over responsibility for managing the Travellers site at Ballyarnett, and have been meeting regularly with Travellers and the Derry Travellers Support Group to progress plans to develop ten properties and a transit site. Work has now commenced and once the site is cleared, North & West Housing Association can begin construction.

The ten houses are for settled Travellers and the transit site will meet the needs of the nomadic Travellers. Six hard stand units with pods (self contained shower, W.C. and laundry unit) have been provided and six Travellers have moved their mobile homes to the hard stands. This is an innovative project and the first within Derry to meet the specific needs of Travellers.

Commenting on the proposals Margaret Boyle, the Director of the Derry Travellers Support Team at Ballyarnett said: “We are delighted to have facilitated consultation between the Travellers families living in Ballyarnett and the Housing Executive... .We believe this project will be a great success particularly as Travellers have been consulted throughout the process and will continue to have an input until completion of the scheme. Since the Housing Executive took over responsibility for the Ballyarnett site relations between us, the Travellers and the NIHE have been excellent. We hope to continue to develop this relationship and to work in partnership with the Housing Executive and North & West Housing Association well into the future and recommend this partnership is viewed as a model of good practice for other agencies.”

## **Outreach project for young people**

The South Belfast District Command Unit of the Police Service observed that due to the increase in ethnic minorities in the Donegall Pass area, an increase in hate crime was observed with 37% of all race crime recorded in this area between April 2004 and March 2005. In response to this, the Community Policing Team developed an initiative aimed at influencing the socialization of young people in the area, to encourage a better understanding of diversity and different cultures contributing in the long term to the relationships between diverse groups in the local community. The initiative was developed in partnership with the Belfast Education and Library Board, Outward Bound NI, South Belfast Area

## Project and the Chinese Welfare Association.

Initially twenty young people were brought together, ten from socially and economically deprived areas of the sector and ten from the Chinese community. They underwent a five day residential course at Ullswater Outward Bound Centre. The emphasis on the course was the development of relationships, exploration of each others culture, identity and experiences and the tackling of their own perceptions and prejudices. Favourable comment was made by the participants on completion of the course, including “Chinese people have been racially attacked for nothing and we have been through the same thing” and “It made me want to continue with this project so we can learn from and share with each other more of who we are.”

As expected outcomes of the project, the project partners anticipate that knowledge and understanding will be created within the communities that share this area and racial attacks will reduce. To date racial attacks have declined by 45%, although this may not be as a direct result of this project. The outcomes are long term given the number of young people that can be catered for on this annual course. The benefits will be arrived at through time as the influence of those attending filters to their contemporaries.

## Annex 2

### Schedule 9(4)

Schedule 9(4) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 details the requirements of an Equality Scheme:

- (1) A scheme shall show how the public authority proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to the relevant functions.
- (2) A scheme shall state, in particular, the authority's arrangements -
  - (a) for assessing its compliance with the duties under Section 75 and for consulting on matters to which a duty under that section is likely to be relevant (including details of the persons to be consulted);
  - (b) for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity;
  - (c) for monitoring any adverse impact of policies adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity;
  - (d) for publishing the results of such assessments as are mentioned in paragraph (b) and such monitoring as is mentioned in paragraph (c);
  - (e) for training staff;
  - (f) for ensuring, and assessing, public access to information and to services provided by the authority.

## Annex 3

### Further Information

#### **The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

Equality House  
7-9 Shaftesbury Square  
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Telephone: 028 90 500 600  
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Fax: 028 90 315 993  
E-mail: [information@equalityni.org](mailto:information@equalityni.org)  
Website: [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

#### **Northern Ireland Community Relations Council (CRC).**

The Community Relations Council (CRC) is an independent company and registered charity established by government to develop and strengthen community relations in Northern Ireland. Its strategic aim is to support development of a peaceful, inclusive, stable and fair society founded on the achievement of reconciliation, co-operation, respect, mutual trust and good relations. It aims to do this by:

- Identifying and developing new and effective approaches to peace-building and reconciliation in partnership with government, organisations and people.
- Assisting communities and institutions in working through and beyond the legacies of the Troubles.
- Promoting the adoption of good relations policy and practice at local, community and institutional level.
- Promoting community relations based on interdependence, equity and respect for diversity.

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**ISBN: 978-1-906414-02-3**

**October 2007**