

**TBUC / Good Relations – Stakeholder Event (26 June 2014):  
Translating policy to practice**

**SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS raised in discussion\***

**Workshop 1: Defining Good Relations.**

**Q1. Where do you see the practical impact of the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy for your organisation's work, either in its current or future implementation?**

- Good relations (GR) are of considerable importance. Racism / sectarianism always have potential to erupt. Primacy of equality duty is vital. Need to be looking at GR duties strategically.
- T:BUC seen as providing opportunity for engagement (shared neighbourhoods and shared campuses etc). Also as a framework for measuring achievements and to hold Executive to account (eg targets therein).
- Uncertainty regarding proposed changes to impact assessments to assess GR, and enforcement powers. Queries regarding over-emphasis on youth (not cause of problem, and only part of solution).
- Importance of consistency of implementation across councils (need for key strategic actions across all councils; effective action plans; GR interwoven into all work). Importance of strong link into community planning / economic considerations. Importance of sharing existing good practice. Importance that funding - PEACE etc allocations are coherent with GR / T:BUC criteria. GR funding has to focus on how we change attitudes.
- Importance of civic leadership and role of elected members advancing actions that are in wider interests of all. Issues of concern should not fall just to a GR officer to deal with, for example a resident's concerns on flag flying.

**Q2. The Commission is clear that a definition of good relations is critical to ensure clarity and consistency of purpose. What are your views?**

- Clear desire for a definition of Good Relations (beyond 2 communities) and focus on outcomes.

\* The points recorded are the views of participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Commission.

- Importance of properly defined GR duty on public authorities to complement the equality duty. Lack of GR definition allows confusion in relationship with equality.
- Has to be an active definition – beyond tolerate, beyond promote, beyond failure to comply. Definition to shape behaviours (hearts and minds can then follow).
- A definition of GR would give Councils and others clarity for actions and to explain why certain actions have been taken. Also in differentiating between GR and Policing & Justice (e.g. hate crimes).
- Important in advice to elected members. Importance of extending beyond council chamber - civic leadership.
- Importance of enforcement powers to deal with non-compliance.

### **Q3. What sort of definition would be helpful?**

- Support expressed for GB definition as basis (“tackling prejudice and promoting understanding”). On balance, support for definition also including consideration of ‘reconciliation’.
- Importance of words describing both actions and outcomes which are commonly understood (and also defined as necessary) – such as: reconciliation, understanding and prejudice.
- Measures of GR considered in terms of what this means:
  - voting on socio-economic, not community issues.
  - high level of mutual understanding and respect is important. (shared versus sanitised spaces – evidence from FETO might suggest neutrality was easiest initially, but can evolve to shared / mutual respect over time).
- Suggestion to clarify what s75(2) means rather than additional GR duty. On balance, discussion suggested the groups covered for GR should be wider than s75(2).
- Powers vested in an Equality and Good Relations Commission (EGRC) could give a clear mandate to promote GR, even without a change to s75(2).

#### **Q4. What other examples of definitions could be drawn upon in this context?**

- Concepts already around to draw on – eg hate crime, employment harassment etc.
- Important to also focus on positive opportunities - support to develop GR.
- Document is silent on defining GR, but includes a definition of Sectarianism, with view to obtaining consensus on a definition of sectarianism (Sectarianism considered to be the other side of GR coin. Many also see it as a form of racism).

#### **SUMMARY**

- TBUC does and can make difference to work in organisations.
- General consensus that definition important. GB model provides basis, but to consider NI context (possibly reconciliation).
- And consensus of need to make sure that those in leadership roles, at all levels, understand and put GR in practice.