

RIGHTS AND RESPECT

**An Executive Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and
Integration**

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RIGHTS AND RESPECT

A Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration

- 1.1 We have now entered a new and hopeful period in our history. *Our vision for this new era is that working together, we will build a shared and better future for all – a society in which all people and all communities are guaranteed rights and respect. The promotion of rights and respect is at the heart of this strategy.***

In the Programme for Government 2008-11, the Executive agreed to drive a programme across government to reduce poverty and address inequality and disadvantage in order to make peoples' lives better (PSA 7).

The specific commitment of objective 5 under PSA 7 is to promote equality and the enforcement of rights, including – as part of that - the commitment to implement a programme of cohesion and integration for a shared and better future for all.

Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 also imposes statutory obligations on OFMDFM in relation to the discharge of all Departmental functions:

(1) A public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- (a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;**
 - (b) between men and women generally;**
 - (c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and**
 - (d) between persons with dependants and persons without.**
- (2) Without prejudice to its obligations under subsection (1), 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.**

1.2 Our Programme for Government makes clear:

equality, fairness, inclusion and the promotion of good relations will be watchwords for all of our policies and programmes across Government. Much has already been achieved and we are committed to working towards a shared and better future for all.

1.3 Section 75 identifies a range of different sectors towards whom due regard must be given for the need to promote equality of opportunity, and towards whom regard must given for the desirability of promoting good relations.

Accordingly we have decided to use the term “good relations” to cover “community relations” and “race relations”, and other manifestations of prejudice between people and communities in which rights and respect are key. This acknowledges the reality of our increasing diversity. In addition to this we seek

to tackle all aspects of hate crime, including sectarian, racist and homophobic crime.

1.3 Previous community relations and race relations policy has been based on a set of fundamental principles and as part of the process of developing 'Rights and Respect' we have produced a set of principles which underpin our good relations policy.

- The role of The Executive, its departments and agencies, must enable everyone to promote rights and respect for a shared and better future.**
- Safety for all, including minority ethnic groups, can be found in building in strong relationship, putting together effective preventions and interventions and respect for the rule of law.**
- The promotion of Equality is the foundation of good relations, good relations cannot be build on inequality.**
- It is essential that all communities, including minority ethnic communities, have an integral role in the planning and delivery process. Inclusion and co-operation must be a feature of design and implementation.**

- **Zero tolerance of any form of harassment, discrimination, prejudice or hate crime.**
- **Leadership and action in the political arena (in the Assembly and in Local Government), in the civic arena (eg business, church, trade unions) and at community and voluntary sector levels is key to enabling the vision to become a reality.**
- **The diversity of cultures and traditions to be understood, appreciated and respected.**
- **Cultural expression must be inclusive peaceful and non-threatening.**
- **Challenging stereotypes and systemic sectarianism, racism or other forms of prejudice must be a priority.**

1.5 A vision of a future built on rights and respects is an aspiration which is already beginning to be evident in parts of our society. For example, we already have strong and comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, and a robust Executive commitment to tackling all forms of inequality.

1.8 The First and deputy First Minister have recently affirmed that (AQW 1675/09 Written Answer):

“Section 75(1) of the NI Act 1998 imposes a general statutory duty on all public authorities (as defined under section 75(3)). This duty requires a public authority to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity in the discharge of all its functions. The Executive has previously stated its commitment to observing this statutory duty. Further detailed enforcement duties also arise under Schedule 9 of the Act, which is given effect by Section 75(4). Various remedies are available to any citizen or group asserting any failure to comply with either the general statutory duty in Section 75(1) or the detailed enforcement duties in Schedule 9.”

The Section 75(2) general statutory duty to have regard for the desirability of good relations is specifically “without prejudice” to the Section 75(1) general statutory duty to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity. Compliance with Section 75 (2) must therefore be specifically non-prejudicial to primary compliance with Section 75(1).

1.9 The enforcement of law and implementation of policy cannot alone tackle intolerance, discrimination and hate crime. Division and polarisation within our society has been grounded in a failure to fully promote rights and respect for all. We want to challenge this difficult legacy by positively promoting progress towards a cohesive, shared and integrated society.

1.10 The Executive must be committed to providing strong and united leadership on these issues. The strategic direction of good relations policy carries the endorsement of all those in the Executive. It includes a commitment to tackle all of the

key problems and issues we still face. In particular, we are committed to the following goals, underpinned by the need to achieve equal rights and equal respect for all sectors in society:

- **Dealing with the legacy of the past;**
- **Removing the physical and symbolic legacies of division and separation;**
- **To ensure and promote the safety of vulnerable communities**
- **Tackling the visible manifestations of racism, sectarianism and other forms of prejudice**
- **To achieve the full and equal participation of all sectors in society**
- **Promoting equality for all our people and changing existing patterns of social disadvantage;**
- **With the support of communities, the dismantling of 'peace walls';**
- **Working with the communities living in interface areas to eliminate sectarian attacks, rioting and civil disturbance;**

- **Tackling all hate crimes motivated by prejudice;**
- **Building a strong community where any person or community, regardless of race, colour, religious or political opinion, age, gender, disability or sexual orientation can live, work, rest and socialise in a context of equal rights and equal respect, acceptance, safety and freedom from violence;**
- **Providing safe and shared and welcoming spaces and public services;**
- **Building a society where cultural diversity is embraced and celebrated;**
- **The elimination of all attacks on symbolic, sporting or cultural premises and monuments; and**
- **Supporting communities, such as minority ethnic communities, to resolve local issues through joint working and local action.**
- **We aim to promote pride in who we are and confidence in our different cultural identities;**

- **We also aim to celebrate and embrace the diversity which is an vital part of our society.**

1.12 We acknowledge how much has already been achieved and continues to be achieved by individuals and groups working together to deal with difficult issues.

1.13 We must ensure that good practice which has produced real and tangible benefits can be encouraged and replicated in other places.

1.14 To translate the vision, policy and strategic priorities into action we propose bringing forward this Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration which will provide a framework for delivery of our objectives.

1.15 The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration is designed to provide a framework for action by us as an administration; by organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors; and by every person and community living here – to do our business and live our lives in a way which helps to build on our commitment to a shared and better future. Some of the actions to be taken – like our entry into partnership government – involve historic political shifts. Others involve more modest but still significant steps in the ways that we relate to each other as members of society.

This is a programme in which everyone has a constructive part to play.

1.18 An overall budget of £28.7m has been approved in the Spending Review to resource this Programme over the period 2008/2011. We must also work closely with the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and other sources of funding to ensure maximum impact by projects and programmes which can demonstrate tangible benefits. OFMDFM must be at the forefront of co-ordinating a joined-up and multi-agency approach to funding.

2. POLITICAL LEADERSHIP/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2.1 We believe that strong local political leadership is essential to the success of this strategy. For this reason we will establish a new Ministerially-led Panel headed by the First and deputy First Minister. With the support of all departments, local government, (from both NILGA and SOLACE) key stakeholders from affected groups and statutory bodies with a role and responsibilities in promoting equality and rights, and tackling sectarianism, racism and hate crime, as well as other prejudice .

2.2 The Ministerial Panel's priorities will be reviewing and monitoring :-

- **cross-Departmental implementation of this CSI strategy in the context of our statutory duties; and**
- **the Programme for Government's commitments that equality, fairness, inclusion and good relations will become "watchwords for all our policies and programmes across Government".**

2.2 The Ministerial Panel will also work directly with a reinvigorated Racial Equality Forum.

2.3 The Ministerial Panel will identify a number of specific issues on which it wishes to see direct action. Having established

clear policy, it will also identify clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring.

2.4 The specific matters requiring attention from Ministers will develop and vary over time. However, a number of possible areas might include:

- **Interface task forces;**
- **Young people and their communities;**
- **Issues around flags and emblems, murals, bonfires, , language and popular protest;**
- **Developing ‘Shared Space’;**
- **‘Crisis Intervention’ and the need for a mechanism to co-ordinate multi-agency rapid responses to tackle sectarianism, racial violence and homophobic hate crime.**

2.5 The Executive, Assembly and Departmental Committee should continue the robust scrutiny of policy delivery and outcomes.

3. FUTURE ACTIONS

We aim to build a sustainable society based on relationships between all people and communities which are characterised by equal rights and equal respect for cultural diversity and which recognise our mutual interdependence in building a shared and better future for all.

3.1 We believe that there are a number of actions that can be taken to encourage the reduction of prejudice and positively promote mutual acceptance such as:

- **Promoting a society based on rights and respect.**
- **Building confident, open and vibrant communities which can accommodate and celebrate diversity.**
- **Promoting equality and fairness for all.**
- **Building the capacity of communities' such as minority ethnic communities to enable meaningful partnerships.**
- **Promoting civic responsibility, inclusion and mutual respect at school and in further and higher education.**
- **Adopting a zero tolerance approach to prejudice, discrimination and hate crime.**

3.4 This Programme is not intended to supersede or replace the Racial Equality Strategy 2005-10, which was endorsed by the motion made by the Assembly on 3 July 2007. Rather it provides the framework for the delivery of aspects of that strategy relating to good race relations in a co-ordinated, joined up process.

We consider that the six shared aims set out in the Racial Equality Strategy are robust and comprehensive and that the section concerning the “Scale of the challenges” in the Strategy is more relevant now than ever before.

3.5 We should revisit the six shared aims following the launch of the ‘Rights and Respect’ in the light of the results of the consultation on the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration. This should be done in close consultation with minority ethnic groups and the wider community. We are committed to the partnership process which developed the six shared aims originally.

3.6 We remain open, of course, to proposals as to how we might strengthen these six shared aims.

3.7 It should be noted that until criminal justice matters are devolved, responsibility for aspects of the shared aim relating to “Equal protection” (“To combat racism and provide effective

protection and redress against racism and racist crime”) rests with Westminster.

4. KEY AIMS OF 'Rights and Respect'

This strategy will:

- **Promote rights and respect.**
- **Emphasise inclusion and interdependence, acceptance and understanding.**
- **Embrace and support minority ethnic communities within this society.**
- **Create practical and open networks across communities, ethnic groups, north/south and east/west to the benefit of all.**
- **Build on shared values of human rights and equality to build a society which honours rights and accepts our civic responsibilities to one another.**
- **Promote partnership communities which celebrate difference.**

Changes in places:

Through the strategy we will support:

- **The development and maintenance of spaces for working, shopping, education, socialising and playing.**
- **The right to live free from sectarian, racist or any other forms of harassment**
- **Shared accessible and welcoming facilities which provide high quality public services.**

- **Peaceful, inclusive and unthreatening expression of culture and cultures.**
- **Safety for groups who wishes to express and celebrate their identity peacefully.**
-

PLACES

4.6 In spite of our divisions there are already many shared spaces – including some city and town centres, shopping streets and shopping centres, workplaces, community halls, healthcare facilities and leisure centres. However through this strategy we will seek to ensure that all spaces and facilities are shared and welcoming, in an ethos of promoting rights and respect.

4.7 It is also important that shared spaces and facilities are welcoming to everyone from the community. This does not mean “neutralising” the area or facilities but creating a welcoming and harmonious environment which reflects and differing identities and minority ethnic groups in a culture of mutual respect.

4.8 We are committed to working with communities to remove threatening and divisive symbols such as paramilitary and other flags and territorial markers, particularly where these are used

in an attempt to intimidate racist and sectarian graffiti and paramilitary murals.

- **There is a particular responsibility on all Councils and Departments to ensure that in the discharge of functions and service delivery to all localities they must fully adhere to their respective general duties under Section 75 Sections (1) and Section (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as well as their detailed enforcement duties under Schedule 9 to the Act.**

4.10 KEY TARGETS

- **Public spaces, thoroughfares, community facilities, town centres should be safe and shared welcoming to the whole community.**
- **All public authorities, including District Councils, must discharge functions and deliver services on the basis of their statutory obligations, recognising the diverse nature of the communities they serve.**
- **Unnecessary duplication of services should be replaced on the basis of objective need by the delivery of services which can be safe and shared by all.**

- **Safe and secure shared community spaces should be developed in a culture of equal rights and mutual respect.**
- **Displays of flags and emblems, graffiti or murals; and parades, public assemblies or festivals should be peaceful occasions held in an environment which affirms equal rights and equal respect for all.**

5. EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

5.1 It is encouraging to see some young people already taking a lead in addressing the divisions in society. It is also clear that young people, especially where there are structural social causal factors such as deprivation and/or a history of local tension are often the people who are both the victims and perpetrators of sectarian, racist or other forms of hate crime.

5.4 In recent years the government has invested in diversionary/intervention programmes as a means of sustaining the peaceful summers which are essential factors in the transformation process. It is now vital that we progress beyond a short-term year-on-year approach. Therefore, this strategy will place a special emphasis on engaging young people and communities in long term strategies to promote equal rights and build a culture of mutual respect. This work will complement our existing objectives for tackling the social structures like poverty, particularly child poverty, which contributes to social exclusion and the marginalisation of many in our community.

With direction from the Ministerial Panel, we will review the importance of work with young people to improve relations. This will include a focus on the structural impact of society in failing to ensure a culture of equal rights and equal respect, particularly where this is related to some young people and interface violence; and interventions with the potential to secure the engagement of young people and the wider community in common activities. This may involve engaging youth services, local authorities, local community and voluntary groups and agencies, parent support and the police service in a variety of co-ordinated support interventions:

The role of education, youth provision and leisure services in providing a focus for young people.

A process of promoting equal rights, equal respect, mutual acceptance, civic responsibility and inclusiveness at a young age.

Providing a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for minority ethnic young people.

5.8 KEY ACTIONS

- **A major Ministerial Panel initiative aimed at promoting rights and respect as a long term strategic approach to affecting the opportunities and outlooks of marginalised young people;**

- **Focusing on education and promoting greater understanding of shared values;**
- **Establishing multi-agency partnerships between indigenous and minority ethnic and migrant worker communities to further embed a culture of rights and respect and celebrate diversity.**

6. RESPECTING CULTURES

6.1 We are culturally rich and diverse, and becoming ever more so.

For many years instead of appreciating and embracing cultural diversity within our society many people have been intimidated or felt alienated by demonstrations of cultural identity.

We believe that people have the right to live free from sectarian, racist or other forms of harassment

6.2 We recognise that there needs to be greater respect for, and understanding of, the cultural diversity within our community.

This not only applies to new arrivals coming here to live and work, but also to minority ethnic communities and long established traditions. We need to move towards promoting rights, embracing diversity and respecting difference in an ethos of mutual respect. The new arrivals provide new occasions and new celebrations which add to the range of cultural traditions which are to be enjoyed and embraced by all.

6.3 Tensions continue to remain during the Loyal Orders marching season and we believe there is a need to ensure previous events which have caused conflict will become events which respect rights, respect different identities, respect the benefit

of dialogue and respect freedom from sectarianism, racism and other forms of prejudice.

6.4 The annual Féile an Phobail festival is another significant development over recent years. This local initiative has transformed a time of year which was marked by serious tensions and has now emerged into a major cultural celebration with opportunities taken for cross-community and inter-cultural engagement.

Cultural celebration which is open, tolerant and respectful of others is a vital element of the quality of life in any society. In the future, cultural tourism can be an important contribution to the economy. Confidence and pride in the peaceful diversity of our cultural identity is essential to the positive and shared promotion of cultural tourism.

In pursuit of the importance of respecting diverse cultures the Ministerial Panel will drive an initiative which brings together community relations, cultural, sporting and arts bodies with a focus on promoting rights and increasing mutual respect throughout the community.

6.7 At the time of publishing this draft strategy the final report of the Ashdown Commission⁶ is anticipated. The interim recommendations relating to the processes and

structures regarding parading have significant relevance to the outworking of this policy and to the role of both OFMDFM and District Councils. However we await the reports final publication.

6.8 KEY AIMS

- **Building a peaceful climate of rights and respect, in which manifestations of identity are non threatening and positively celebrate diversity;**
- **Supporting local communities to resolve contentious cultural issues;**
- **Encouraging greater engagement and understanding of cultural diversity and inter-cultural relations by promoting rights and respect through schools, youth clubs and by supporting outreach programmes;**
- **Working to eliminate attacks on cultural, sporting and other symbolic property and monuments ; and**
- **Promoting cultural exchanges and joint events initiatives.**

7. A SECURE COMMUNITY

- 7.1 It is essential that this aspect of 'Rights and Respect' is read within the context of the paras 4.6-4.11 which looks at 'changes in places'.**
- 7.2 Many people do not feel safe going into an area which is perceived to be of a different community. This fear arises from the legacy of conflict, as well as misperception of current realities. Such fears are hard to eliminate quickly.**
- 7.3 We are committed to the safety and security of all in every workplace, public area or social setting.**
- 7.4 The local community can contribute significantly to this aim by creating more shared spaces and facilities and by making public areas as welcoming and inclusive by the removal of flags which mark out local territory, sectarian and racist graffiti, as well as paramilitary murals.**
- 7.5 Inclusive and culturally diverse community events in public areas also encourage greater integration and shared use.**
- 7.6 The PSNI has an important part to play in ensuring the security and safety of all people and in particular tackling hate crime, within the context of the overarching anti-discrimination and**

Human Rights laws, as well as Section 75, Hate Crime and Anti-Social behaviour legislation. We will work closely with the PSNI to ensure community safety, to tackle hate crime, to lower anti-social or threatening behaviour.

7.7 KEY AIMS

- **Encouraging community events which reflect cultural diversity and are open, welcoming and inclusive to all on the basis of equal rights and mutual respect;**
- **Ensuring that the PSNI provide a high level of community safety and respect for Human Rights in an overarching ethos of mutual respect;**
- **Based on the principle of mutual respect, continue to promote initiatives which reflect acceptance of cultural diversity and the ways in which it is expressed;**
- **Building community support networks across community, cultural and minority ethnic groups;**
- **Building capacity of local and minority ethnic communities to support people who have experienced race and sectarian or other forms of hate crime.**

**8. A COHESIVE COMMUNITY;
REACHING OUT AND BEING INCLUSIVE**

8.1 Embracing and celebrating diversity in the context of promoting rights and respect is central to the full participation of all people within the wider community. Hate crime is a violent, destructive and frightening scar on society and responding to it means that all people and communities need to stand up and protect those within our community who are suffering harassment and intolerance. Racist, sectarian, homophobic and other forms of intimidatory graffiti and the targeting of the homes including those of the new communities and settled minority ethnic communities should not be tolerated. Communities must unite in condemnation of these attacks.

8.2 Intercultural exchange is a dynamic and rewarding two-way process. The local Chinese community is a living example of that. They have thrived without any loss of identity and with the richness of the Chinese culture being appreciated and valued by all.

Embracing Difference and Celebrating Cultural Diversity

8.3 We want to ensure that all minority communities are fully respected and affirmed of their rights. We will not tolerate any

**sectarianism, racism or hate crime within our communities.
We should reach out, help and support minority communities.**

8.7 Migrant workers play an essential role in our economy.

Employers here have increasingly turned to migrant workers to fill labour and skills gaps. Migrant workers are generally regarded as one of the most entrepreneurial sectors in our community and drivers of our economy.

8.8 It is evident that this strategy brings both opportunities and responsibilities for the public sector, private sector and the Trade Unions. The partnership work around Anti-Racist Workplace Week demonstrates that employers and Trade Unions generally do take this issue very seriously.

8.9 KEY AIMS

- **Zero tolerance of all forms of hate crime, whilst actively promoting rights and respect.**
- **Building inclusive communities open to all, no matter what their background.**
- **Increased funding under the Ethnic Minority Fund and support for sustained inter-cultural work.**

- **Promoting greater understanding between all people and communities .**
- **Working closely with the PSNI, District Policing Partnerships, Community Safety Partnerships and Probation Board in local areas to address sectarian, racist and hate crime**
- **Encouraging greater understanding of new cultures and communities.**
- **Supporting workplace initiatives to promote rights and respect, and an understanding of cultural diversity.**

9. LOCAL PEOPLE/LOCAL SOLUTIONS – THE ROLE FOR DISTRICT COUNCILS

- 9.1 Local leaders are responsible for the quality of life of the whole community in which they live and serve. They have a key responsibility for bringing communities together. The challenges are naturally very different in different places. The need is for actions and programmes to meet local, individual circumstances devised by, and involving, people who understand the issues and know the local communities. Effective solutions to specific problems will only result from the long-term and dedicated work of many organisations and individuals. Positive outcomes do not arrive overnight. Sustained, joined-up working which is properly supported to deliver incremental improvement is key. This local work is vital to build up communities' confidence and resilience in the face of change.**
- 9.2 We recognise that a “top down, one size fits all approach” does not work. Government must set the framework for action; the principles to be applied at local level; and through its own joined-up commitment to a shared and better future support local initiatives. It must ensure accountability. It must ensure an effective “challenge” function is in place to guarantee Councils' local action plans are aligned with local priorities.**

9.3 Under this programme it is proposed that this dual role of support and challenge be exercised by the ministerial led panel and through the work of OFMdfM.

9.4 Currently all 26 local councils participate in an OFMDFM sponsored District Council Community Relations Programme totalling approximately £2.5m.

9.5 In line with the renewed emphasis on activity at the local level, all councils will be obliged to replace existing Community Relations Programmes with local CSI strategies in alignment with 'Rights and Respect' and reflecting the distinct and respective provisions of section 75 (1) and (2).

In addition local plans will also be required to:

- **Be a biennial process**
- **explain how resources will be allocated to deliver the plan;**
- **include clear methodology to evaluate the impact;**
- **demonstrate linkages with PEACE III Peace Plans; and**

- **are directed to both transform local communities and also to mainstream Section 75 into “the corporate DNA” of the organisation; officers and elected members alike.**

9.8 Since 1995, European funding has been an invaluable additional resource to help build relationships between communities. For as long as this continues to be available, particularly currently through PEACE III, it is vital that the continuance of Government and European finance is integrated to maximise the impact in the lives of people and communities at the local level. In the planning process it will be a requirement for Councils to identify the complementarities and supplementary allocation and utilisation of both funding streams against local programme activities.

9.9 With the new funding for the District Councils’ ‘Rights and Respect’ CSI programme we will review funding arrangements to local groups involved in challenging sectarianism and racism and other forms of hate crime and prejudice. In consultation with District Councils and local stakeholders we will develop criteria for core funding (and small grants) to ensure consistency in future arrangements with a view to introducing new arrangements in 2010/11.

9.10 We will also work closely with other Departments and funding bodies providing financial support, often through District Councils, to communities for related capacity building/direct intervention purposes to enable the impact and value of investment to be maximised.

THE LINK WITH RPA

9.11 Until the reorganisation of local government is complete we will continue to contract with current District Councils in their delivery of 'Rights and Respect' CSI programmes to meet the identified needs in their areas. Once RPA re-organisation is in place contractual funding relationships will be with the new local government bodies.

REGIONAL SUPPORT FOR LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

9.16 In a context of change, there is a need for work at the regional support level to:

- **Sustain and underpin quality of action at the local level;**
- **Provide practical, consistent support, training and guidance; and**
- **Support innovative actions to develop and promote rights and respect which extend beyond local boundaries or which are of regional significance.**

9.17 This regional strand will also support capacity building measures and resources required to enable all people and communities to participate fully and effectively in public, economic, social and cultural life.

9.18 We see this regional support and co-ordination function being provided by FM/dFM as joint chairs of the Ministerial-led Panel. To ensure effectiveness and efficiency in terms of public expenditure and for the benefit of public clarity on the complementary functions we will publish an updated Memorandum of Understanding between the Equality Commission, the Racial Equality Forum and representatives from minority ethnic communities.

RACIAL EQUALITY FORUM

9.22 We recognise the strategic importance of the Racial Equality Forum and we reaffirm our commitment to it and its work. The Forum will continue to monitor implementation of Departmental Action Plans and Departmental Race Champions. As indicated previously the relationship between the Forum and the Equality Commission will be vital as we address the two major problems of racism and sectarianism at both local and regional levels.

9.23 The Forum will be represented on the Ministerial-led Rights and Respect' CSI Panel.

10. LOOKING OUTWARD

THE NORTH/SOUTH, EAST/WEST AND EUROPEAN DIMENSIONS

- 10.1 It has already been recognised that improving relationships within our society has to be viewed in the wider context of developing strong relationships across the island and between here and Britain. Furthermore, it is essential to appreciate and allow for the impact of the expansion of the European Community on society and inter-community relationships as the diversity of cultures grows and grows.**
- 10.2 The reality is that ours is a society of many identities and if this policy is to achieve its full potential we must ensure that an effective outward looking dimension is part of it. It must be part of our contribution both to learn from others' experiences and to continue to share our own with other areas emerging from conflict.**
- 10.3 We have clearly emphasised that the priorities for this policy are promoting rights and respect to address issues of sectarianism, inequality, racism and other forms of prejudice and hate crime and their impact on relationships between people and communities. As we emerge from conflict, much has changed in terms of relations not only north and south but**

also east and west, alongside the economy and infrastructure. Much work has been done to promote tourism and retail on an island-wide basis. We have witnessed increased movement of capital, migration and working – north and south.

10.5 The devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales provide an opportunity for us to share experiences and it is essential that such linkages are robust to enable regional factors to be recognised and considered.

WAY FORWARD

10.7 It has been a perception that policies which have been working to build relationships within our society have done so to the exclusion of these wider dimensions. This perception is not accurate and much good work has been undertaken to promote networking between individuals, groups and agencies throughout these islands and farther afield. In order to consolidate the good work we need to develop a programmatic approach to promoting rights and respect, tackling historical differences on this island and to building better social networks beyond these shores.

10.8 We have worked to promote economic development, infrastructure and service delivery on a north/south basis. The new administration here has also worked closely with

Westminster and the other devolved regions. However there remain between sections of society – north and south, east and west – issues which affect our development. We have much to learn, both from each other and about our history

10.9 Re-building communities and strengthening social and community cohesion has been a challenge for many different societies. We want to learn lessons from those which have successfully addressed similar problems. We want to identify and adopt best practice in building cohesion.

10.10 KEY AIMS

- **Identifying key exemplar projects which have proven track records of success in promoting rights and respect, tackling sectarianism, racism or other forms of prejudice and hate crime.**
- **Sharing of relevant research and experience on a North/South, East/West and European basis.**
- **Encouraging cross-border community, cultural and sporting initiatives.**
- **Mutual promotion of cultural diversity on North/South, East/West and European levels**

- **Encouraging better social networks throughout these islands and farther afield.**

11. FRAMEWORK FOR STRATEGIC ACTION

11.2 A key dimension to implementing ‘Rights and Respect’, is the Ministerial led Panel. Both the First and deputy First Ministers will lead the group. This panel will include key stakeholders including representatives from the relevant communities, government departments and statutory bodies in order that the policy priorities are quickly translated into joined-up strategic direction and co-ordinated practical actions to address the themes of the CSI Programme. The Ministers’ Panel will establish and hold accountable inter-agency groups to deliver outcomes which make immediate and meaningful improvements in the lives of people. Ministers will also set in place longer term work to address more deeply embedded issues. All actions will be based on:

- **inter-departmental working; and**
- **embedding ‘Rights and Respect’ into policies and programmes across Government.**

11.3 Ministers are resolved to ensure that ‘bottom up/top down’ is seen to work and for that reason only we do not wish to be prescriptive about detailed actions beginning with the implementation of this programme. However it is important to provide a clear sense of direction and timescales in order that

our partners at the local level, including community representative groups, and in local government can plan accordingly. We are therefore providing an outline Action Plan for consideration as part of the consultation process.

11.4 Having established the strategic direction of ‘Rights and Respect’ we will require the principles and objectives to be reflected in District Councils CSI action plans which are funded by OFMDFM. We will produce revised guidance to Councils to facilitate this requirement.

11.5 In keeping with the key targets elaborated in para 4.10 we are committing to the following actions for Year 1 of the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration.