Programme for Government

Executive Office

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The Community Relations Council (CRC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Draft Programme for Government (PfG) which is being conducted in a full and open public debate. CRC believe that it is absolutely vital for the future of the whole society here.

**Introduction**

The Community Relations Council is an arms-length body of the government of Northern Ireland and a catalyst for good inter-community and inter-cultural community relations work in the region. In making its response, CRC is mindful of its particular existing responsibilities ‘to identify and develop effective approaches to peace-building and reconciliation in partnership with local people and organisations, and with central and local government’.

CRC promotes the benefits of good relations policies and practice at regional, local, community and institutional levels; advocating for acknowledgment of our interdependence; challenging sectarianism, racism and all forms of violence motivated by hate. The delivery of a peaceful, reconciled and interdependent society will be based on social partnership, the broader engagement of civil society and positive political leadership underpinned by priorities including fairness, equity, openness and diversity, and we continue to believe that it will take a concerted, integrated and collaborative effort to build a just, equal, fair, peaceful and reconciled society.

**General Comments**

CRC is supportive of policy and practice approaches that aim to embed a durable peace and achieve genuine change, both at an individual and community level, particularly for those communities and individuals that have suffered most as a result of the conflict. CRC urges the inclusion of the broad range of good relations issues across the PfG in order to support the peace process and create the conditions to enable society to build on existing commitments in the Together: Building a United Community and A Fresh Start Agreement.

CRC therefore welcomes the outcome focus of the draft PfG which aims to devise a framework that will ensure that actions taken by government and its partners will bring about a real difference to society.

It is important to cultivate a range of outcomes that everyone can work towards and outcomes that can, collectively, bring society to where it should be, especially in the context of a society emerging from conflict. Many have felt the benefits of the peace dividend, but some have not and it is important to acknowledge that much work still needs to be undertaken in order to not only sustain the political agreement, but to develop and embed peace and reconciliation across the whole of our society.

Peace is the responsibility of everyone in society. A collective approach towards a shared and reconciled society within the context of an intercultural society requires a new way of thinking and doing things. Whist the draft framework sets out a purpose of *‘Improving wellbeing for all- by tackling disadvantage, and driving economic growth’* CRC recommends strengthening this by reference to our particular circumstances as a society emerging from conflict. The T:BUC strategy should be considered in the development of this statement.

Our response to the PfG will focus on those aspects that relate to our vision for a peaceful and reconciled region. In consultation with stakeholders at the TEO’s TBUC Engagement Forum the value of a vision for peace led at the highest level was endorsed.

**Measuring Peace**

CRC has a strategic interest in monitoring and evaluating peace-building activities, and uses this information to map progress and support the building and development of good community relations. In addition to internal evaluation processes, CRC has also undertaken a 3 year (2012-2014) independent review of the condition and impact of the peace process in Northern Ireland. This appraisal was independently funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and has resulted in the publication of three Peace Monitoring Reports.Detailed and statistical evidence was gathered across four dimensions - security, equality, political progress and cohesion and sharing. This annual monitoring has provided a mechanism to measure the distance we have travelled either closer to or further away from the shared goal of a peaceful and inclusive society.

It has been argued that peace-building evaluation has the potential to empower and to capacitate users and communities[[1]](#footnote-1) and so the development of outcomes, indicators and measures offers the Executive an opportunity to strategically consider how to build peace. Therefore the move to more deliberately measure outcomes is welcomed.

**Outcomes**

As already stated CRC’s core business deals with and supports approaches and interventions aimed at building strong, cohesive and reconciled communities. CRC therefore welcomes the development of specific outcomes which intersect with community relations issues, and which if achieved will make a positive contribution to peace-building and reconciliation.

It is important to have these issues reflected in strategic outcomes thereby showing government and its partner’s commitment to supporting this work during the lifespan of the PfG.

Specifically, we are pleased to see the following outcomes contained within the draft programme:

* Outcome 3 - We have a more equal society;
* Outcome 7 - We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other;
* Outcome 9 - We are a shared society that respects diversity;
* Outcome 10 - We are a confident, welcoming, outward-looking society;
* Outcome 12 - We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and to invest.

The backdrop of these outcomes identifies issues that correlate with the work of CRC and the community based organisations that we support. Importantly the context of these outcomes also successfully reflects themes and matters raised by participants during meetings of the *Together: Building a United Community Engagement Forum*[[2]](#footnote-2)*.* Issues such as intolerance towards those who are different, promoting the benefits of a diverse society, increasing mutual understanding, reducing fear and mistrust, tackling paramilitarism, the development of shared spaces in education, housing and society, improving attitudes, building good relations, leadership and developing confident communities form the basis for CRC’s work and reveals the stark realities of a society continuing to grapple with the legacy of the past. CRC welcomes the acknowledgement and inclusion of these issues and is pleased they form the foundation of the associated outcomes.

Moving forward it is important to ensure consistency with existing strategies including the Executive’s *Together: Building a United Community* strategy refers to a ‘shared and united society’. It would be useful to synchronise this terminology and therefore bring greater alignment with existing good relations work, especially given that this work will continue during the lifespan of the PfG.

**Indicators/Measures**

CRC responded to the Review of the Good Relations Indicators[[3]](#footnote-3) and will draw on comments made during that consultation as they remain relevant to this discussion.

Generally, it is CRC’s view that the indicators are broad and corresponding measurements narrow. We welcome the development of indicators that speak to shared space, reconciliation and respect, but the corresponding measurements are limiting and risk an incomplete picture regarding the true state of good relations and peace-building. There is a real danger that disproportionate streamlining could result in the loss of pertinent data and it is CRC’s view that the PfG should aim to measure and monitor the impact of all good relations activity across the executive, and go even further and include *all* peace-building programmes.

Peace-building is unpredictable, and often experiences unexpected set-backs. Consequently, it is important to capture the various realities of success so as not to discourage innovation and learning. It is for this reason the interpretation of data is such a critical aspect of monitoring peace as it can provide a wider perspective on how society is benefitting from peace-building activity e.g. impact of symbolic events.

Also, the indicators appear to have a regional output and CRC seeks clarification regarding the reporting of geographical progress in the thematic areas pertaining to peace-building and the relationship to community based planning in District Councils. A mechanism to categorise data in this format would support local interventions, as well as assisting the policy development process, particularly for district councils[[4]](#footnote-4).

CRC also suggests a principle mechanism for co-ordinating, monitoring and evaluating of the effectiveness of PfG OBA’s across departments and agencies be clearly identified and a clear process for the review and revision of the strategy. This will encourage a stronger sense of the region working to one overall plan. It would also be important that key success messages are communicated widely by the Department and its sponsored bodies.

The following section contains comments/suggestions regarding indicators and measurements and has drawn links with the Good Relations Indicators.

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| **PfG** | **T:BUC** | **CRC recommendations** |
| The PfG Indicator number 31 aims to **Increase Shared Space.**  It hopes to achieve this via a measurement which examines shared space as leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres and how ‘shared and open’ it is to both Protestants and Catholics’. | The T:BUC Strategy priority: **OUR SHARED COMMUNITY** has a shared aim *‘to create a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone’* and the following outcomes (Good Relations Indicators):   * Outcome 2.1 - Increased use of shared space and services (e.g. leisure centres, shopping centres, education, housing) * Outcome 2.2 - Shared Space is accessible to all. | It is CRC’s position that the outcome/indicator in the draft PfG and the associated action plans should align the Good Relations Indicators, which include the current proposed PfG measurement and measure schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces. Given the work prioritised and underway within T:BUC regarding shared education and shared housing, and the pillars of work set out within the forthcoming Peace IV, it would be remiss to not include education and housing. It would also be useful to build on other relevant data collection to develop data on attitudes and behaviours towards sharing.  CRC suggested the following during the Review of Indicators consultation:  Education   * %/number of teachers involved in shared and integrated education programmes; * %/number of trainee teachers who undertake placements in two or more different sectors;   Housing   * %/number of people living in non-single identity areas; * %/number of people requesting to live in a mixed area; * %/number of residents actively involved in creating and supporting shared neighbourhoods   Social clauses   * %/number of government contracts incorporated with social clauses carrying out work in interface communities/contested space;   The above are primarily focused on quantitative data and equate to outputs that could underpin the outcomes and would need to be supplemented with qualitative data, either through specific research or data from evaluation processes. This supplementary data would enable an examination of the how’s and the why’s, as well as helping to inform future interventions.  It is the quality of engagement within shared spaces that is critical, and an examination as to how this interaction has built relations and improved attitudes. Planned interaction, rather than chance encounters, will be needed to ensure real progress. |
|  | The T:BUC Strategy priority: **OUR SAFE COMMUNITY** aim is *‘to create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety’* has the following outcomes (Good Relations Indicators):     * Outcome 3.1 - Reduce the prevalence of hate crime and intimidation. * Outcome 3.2 - A community where places and spaces are safe for all. | It will be important for officials to review the draft indicators and measurements with the T:BUC Good Relations Indicators in relation to both a ‘shared’ and ‘safe’ society to ensure complementarity. This is particularly important given the areas examined by the indicators i.e. levels of hate crime; intimidation and homelessness; intimidation by flags/murals; safety of town centres; attendance at events and peace-lines.  CRC has a long history of working with community and interface workers and suggests that this work is acknowledged and included in the final PfG through the recording of measurements such as:   * % of Interface barriers removed; * % of new/strengthening of interface walls/gates/security barriers; * level of cross-community engagement in change process; * % of people who feel positive and harmonious relationships exist between communities at interfaces/contested spaces.   Additional measurements could measure could record:   * %/number of people who feel area they live in is safe; * %/number of families/households applying for SPED or re-housed by SPED; * %/number of people who would report a hate crime to the police; * %/number of attacks on symbolic premises i.e. churches, chapels, schools, orange halls, GAA clubs. |
|  | The T:BUC Strategy has a number of outcomes under the cultural expression priority: **OUR CULTURAL EXPRESSION** aim is to *‘to create a community which promotes mutual respect and understanding, is strengthened by its diversity and where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced’* and the following outcomes (Good Relations Indicators):   * Outcome 4.1 - Increase sense of community belonging (widens contribution beyond community background) * Outcome 4.2 - Cultural diversity is celebrated | The Good Relations Indicators examined attitudes regarding influencing decisions, cultural identity and traditions of Catholics, Protestants and Minority Ethnic people. Again there should be complementarity between the Good Relations Indicators and the draft PfG indicators and measurements. This should be reviewed, especially in the context of the establishment of the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition. Other measurements to consider when looking at culture are:   * %/number of people who have attended an event that celebrates a different cultural tradition; * % of shared cultural events;   As before it is important to balance quantitative with qualitative data i.e. local decision making could be affected by capacity issues or power relations within the local community. |

The following section comments on indicators/measurements not reflected in the Good Relations Indicators.

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| The PfG indicator 35 aims to ***‘Increase Reconciliation’*.**  It proposes using % of population who believe their cultural identity is respected by society as a way of measuring this. | CRC welcomes the inclusion of the reconciliation theme and is not convinced it is an indicator but rather, views it as an overarching theme that envelops the entire PfG. CRC supports greater prioritisation of reconciliation by better resourcing delivery through long-term support for community relations organisations and projects with an outcome based focus.  The current PfG indicator seems to confuse reconciliation with respect (albeit that the latter is a component of the former). If pursued in its current format CRC does not believe this alone is sufficient; it will provide some indication but it does not cover all aspects of reconciliation and needs strengthening.  As the arms-length body responsible for peace-building and reconciliation, CRC is re-examining the meaning of reconciliation as we enter a new phase of the peace process. CRC will work with the department to ensure this refined definition influences the reconciliation dimension of the final PfG. In the meantime, officials may want to consider the following during this consultation period:  ‘*Reconciliation is based on a positive vision of a new intercultural future with strong commitment to democracy, equality, human rights and the rule of law. It will be achieved within that positive vision by government, leaders, NGOs and other institutions, communities and individuals’.* Possible reconciliation outcomes could include:   * Fractured relationships healed. * Generosity offered and reciprocated. * Trust and compassion evident. * Others and other world views respected. * Strong social justice policy and practice. * All Section 75 groups protected against social, economic and political exclusion or disadvantage. * All policy development prioritises reconciliation including dismantling policy and structures that prolong poor relationships, division, injustice and inequality. * Past injustice, past hurt and the horrific consequences of our recent communal conflict on individuals, families, communities and institutions acknowledged and addressed. |
| PfG indicator 26 aims to ***Increase Respect for Each Other***.  It proposes developing a ‘Respect Index’. | Firstly, it is unclear how this links to the reconciliation indicator as both refer to ‘respect’? As presented in its current format it is narrow and does not embrace the intercultural nature of the reconciliation and respect agendas. This needs further thought as the Respect Index develops.  Secondly, within this index it will be necessary to capture information regarding behaviours and attitudes i.e. experience of being respected, how they respect others, and finally opinion regarding respect ‘behaviours/attitudes’ from/by society.  Data relating to contentious parades/flags/attacks on symbolic premises are important markers as to how society is moving forward and officials should consider measuring these trends.  CRC looks forward to working with officials during the development of a respect index and working with the Department in developing these indicators as part of the PfG. |

**Conclusion**

CRC supports the results based approach and the opportunities presented in relation to peace-building. We hope it will be meaningful and far reaching and engage all stakeholders in its delivery with a strong commitment and architecture to measure its progress. Central and local government will play a central role in making it happen and every effort must be made to engage service deliverers, policy makers, politicians, the business sector and society generally.

CRC welcomes the greater emphasis on peace, shared society and developing respect. Further clarification is needed as to how the proposed indicators/measures in the draft PfG relate to TEO’s Good Relations Indicators and what this means for future T:BUC monitoring.

Peace-building work takes time, not always immediately evident as to the impact and progress may not be ‘quick’ and can sometimes be difficult to report.  It can be stop start in nature, and can be subject to shocks relating to breakdowns in relationships. It is important that measurements find a way of reflecting the underlying resilience. Any new approach undertaken by the PfG includes learning for those responsible for activity and implementation.

The reduced 8 week consultation period would have benefitted from a formal extension, particularly as the consultation has taken place over a holiday period.

Finally, CRC looks forward to working with government departments and their partners to help formulate departmental action plans.

*For further information contact:*

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1. Bush, K. (2004) 'The Commodification, Compartmentalization and Militarization of Peacebuilding'. In Keating and Knight (eds) Building Sustainable Peace. Tokyo and Edmonton: UN University Press and U of Alberta Press, 23-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [TBUC Engagement Forum Summary Reports](http://www.community-relations.org.uk/2016/07/tbuc-engagement-forum/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/good-relations-indicators-2015-update> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. It is important to note that not all areas experience good relations in the same way, and it is important to be able to carry out comparative analysis and lesson learning within and between different geographies. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)