

Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration: A Summary Document and Aid to Dialogue

Community Dialogue

Steps into Dialogue Project

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FOREWORD

Community Dialogue welcomes the publication of the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Programme (hereafter referred to as CSI). In Northern Ireland there are difficult legacy issues that we have yet to resolve and important work to continue in the building of a shared and reconciled society. The CSI consultation offers an opportunity to develop a policy, which sets goals, actions and structures to build on the peace process.

Community Dialogue hopes that voices of young people, victims and survivors, interface communities, prisoners, ex combatants, women and others are fully included in the CSI strategy and its outworking.

This user friendly summary document has been produced to help groups and individuals understand the document so that they can make a response to it by the closing date of 29th October 2010.

We have added some questions at the end (see page 17) to help you consider your response.

More details about CSI and the consultation can be found on <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality/community-relations/content-equality-newpage-csi.htm>

INTRODUCTION

The First and Deputy First Ministers set out their vision for a new era in which, working together, we build a better, shared future for all. They believe the Programme for Cohesion, Integration and Sharing sets out crucial goals to achieving that better, shared future.

They commit to addressing disaffection among young people; living in harmony with people from minority ethnic backgrounds; tackling conditions that perpetuate the need for urban interfaces and rural segregation, expanding shared spaces and services and not tolerating hate crime or intimidation.

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOOD RELATIONS AND OTHER POLICY AREAS

Good Relations And Equality

The Programme for Government states:

Equality, fairness, inclusion and the promotion of good relations will be watchwords for...our policies and programmes across Government....we are committed to working towards a shared...future for all.

Public authorities will have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity.

“Good relations” is clarified as incorporating “community relations” and “race relations”.

CSI is one of a family of policies to tackle prejudice and hate. Complementary policies will be sought to promote equality, fairness, rights respect and responsibility for all Section 75 (1) groups¹.

Good Relations And Racial Equality

CSI intends to provide a framework for the more efficient delivery of aspects of the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005-10 that relate to good race relations.

Emphasis is placed on the need for an immigration policy relevant to the needs of Northern Ireland.

The need to examine what support can be given to immigrants who, through no fault of their own, fall into difficulty is highlighted.

¹ Section 75 (1) groups include; age; marital status; men and women; persons with a disability; persons with dependants; political opinion; racial group; religious belief; sexual orientation

2. POLITICAL LEADERSHIP/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A new Panel for CSI will be established, headed by OFMDFM² Ministers. It will work with the Racial Equality Forum and other stakeholders, to address the goals of the programme as follows:

- Address physical and community divisions created by interfaces;
- Ensure the safety of vulnerable groups;
- Tackle racism, sectarianism, intolerance and other forms of prejudice;
- Zero tolerance for sectarian, religious, racist or hate prejudice motivated attacks;
- Promote equality of opportunity and tackle disadvantage;
- Expand safe, shared spaces;
- Build a society where cultural diversity is celebrated, promote pride in who we are and confidence in our different identities;
- Create a new improved framework for managing/regulating public assemblies;
- Achieve full participation of all sectors in all aspects of society;
- Support local initiatives in resolving local issues;
- Address sectarian behaviour at sports events.

Themes For Action

Short Term

- Develop 'Shared Space'.
- Enhance community capacity in implementing CSI.
- Co-ordinate multi-agency rapid responses to all forms of hate crime.
- Ensure good relations are embedded in all government policy making.
- Early strategic interventions tackling anti-social behaviour and interface tensions.
- Promote CSI through community renewal.

Medium Term

- The relationship between young people and the community.
- Provide a new, improved framework for resolving public assembly disputes.
- Share best practice aimed at improving CSI.

Long Term

- Interfaces.
- Encourage shared neighbourhoods.
- Reduce segregated services.
- Tackle issues entrenching community separation, exclusion and hate.
- Cultural identity, including issues around flags and emblems, murals, bonfires, cultural expression, language and popular protest.

3. PEOPLE AND PLACES

3.1. People

Tackling Sectarianism, Racism And Intolerance

CSI emphasises the need not only to provide opportunities for a better future for 'traditional' sections of the community, but to embrace and integrate EU and non EU migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

Promoting Shared Workplaces

Promoting shared, welcoming workplaces is a responsibility for the public and private sectors.

Education

The role of integrated education is recognised. The role of schools in addressing issues such as sectarianism is outlined in later sections.

Economy

- The importance of tackling deprivation as part of CSI is acknowledged.
- The need to encourage foreign investment against a background of Northern Ireland's negative image is acknowledged.
- Invest NI must be supported by actions to address community division.

Health And Leisure

- Duplication in health and leisure service provision and health inequalities must be addressed.
- Sport has a role in developing good relations.

Further Education

Access and participation are highlighted with the Department of Education and Learning's Access and Engagement Pilot Programme cited as an example of action to increase access.

3.2. Places

Mixed Religion Neighbourhoods

The report highlights the desire of most people to live in mixed religion neighbourhoods. CSI will support the work of the Department for Social Development in promoting and providing shared living.

Shared Spaces

Shared space is important in creating viable, open, vibrant towns and cities. CSI seeks to ensure that all spaces and facilities are shared and welcoming. This does not mean "neutralising" areas but creating an environment which removes any perceived threat and welcomes different cultures.

OFMDFM will review the Flags Protocol which established working relationships between agencies with responsibilities related to the flying of flags.

Key Aims

- Public spaces and community facilities should be safe, shared and welcoming.
- Safe shared community spaces should be developed.
- Public authorities should discharge functions and deliver services equally and inclusively recognising the diverse nature of the community they serve and the barriers that can be experienced by minority ethnic people in particular.
- Unnecessary duplication of services should be targeted.
- Displays of flags, emblems, graffiti or murals as well as parades, public assemblies and festivals should be held in a way that respects individual and community rights.

4. EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

Young people at risk need to be prevented from becoming disaffected and need to be empowered to engage in positive activities with beneficial impacts and outcomes.

Key Aims

- A major initiative to develop a longer term strategic approach to helping marginalised young people under the Ministerial Panel for CSI.
- Supporting young people to increase their civic responsibility.
- Promote greater understanding of shared values through education.
- Establish multi-agency partnerships with indigenous and minority ethnic and migrant communities to address the needs of young people.

5. RESPECTING CULTURES

The need to work together across Government to identify ways of promoting intercultural respect is emphasised

Respecting Cultures In Education

The report highlights the Department of Education's aim to promote respect for newcomers, Irish Travellers and children from the Roma community. It emphasises the role of Citizenship Education in the development of positive and effective social actors and the Local and Global Citizenship aspect of the curriculum in providing opportunities to explore racism and sectarianism.

Symbolic Premises and Cultural Expression

CSI aims to reduce attacks on GAA and Orange Halls and will continue to build on local agreements around contested parades.

Community Festivals

The role of community festivals in promoting social cohesion, social inclusion, equality of opportunity and good relations is highlighted.

Key Aims

- A climate of fairness, equality, rights, responsibilities and respect.
- Resolve contentious cultural issues locally
- Promote understanding of cultural diversity and cultural identity.
- Encourage engagement with cultural diversity and understanding of intercultural relations.
- Eliminate attacks on cultural, sporting and other symbolic property and monuments.
- Promote cultural exchanges, joint events and tourism initiatives.

6. A SECURE COMMUNITY

The Flags Protocol will be reviewed.

The role of government agencies in ensuring the provision of safe shared spaces such as museums and libraries was highlighted.

The Department of Justice will develop a new community safety strategy.

New legislation tackling sectarian behaviour at spectator sports will go in a Justice Bill before the Assembly in 2010-2011.

OFMDFM will take the lead in exploring how to remove Peace Walls.

The Department for Social Development will promote increased networking between Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships.

Key Aims

- Encourage community events which reflect cultural diversity and are open, welcoming and inclusive.
- Ensure that agencies provide a high level of community safety within a rights based framework and an overarching ethos of mutual respect.
- Promote initiatives based on mutual respect, acceptance of cultural diversity and the ways in which it is expressed.
- Build community support networks between community, cultural and minority ethnic groups.
- Build community capacity to support people who have experienced hate crime.

7. A COHESIVE COMMUNITY

CSI embraces and celebrates diversity. Everyone has a role in reaching out to and being inclusive of new arrivals in our society..

Key Aims

- Zero tolerance for crimes motivated by prejudice and all hate crime.
- Promote intercultural work through the Minority Ethnic Development Fund.
- Build an inclusive community open to all.
- Promote understanding between 'traditional' communities and new arrivals.
- Work with the PSNI, Crime Reduction Partnerships and Probation Board to address racism and hate crime.
- Encourage understanding of new cultures and new sections of the community.
- Develop and support workplace initiatives to promote respect and understanding of cultural diversity.

8. SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

CSI recognises the role of Local District Councils in delivering good relations.

OFMDFM will engage with community leaders in bringing communities together.

CSI will continue to support volunteers within communities.

The Racial Equality Forum is strategically important and will be represented on the Ministerial Panel.

Key Aims

- Support Council delivery of Good Relations programmes and funding.
- Ensure the centrality of the local community to Good Relations decision making and implementation.
- Nurture local, leadership, empowering the local community to identify solutions to local issues.

9. LOOKING OUTWARD

North/South, East/West And European Dimensions

CSI must ensure that an outward looking dimension is part of the programme.

10. MECHANISM TO OVERSEE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CSI

Mechanisms for co-ordinating the implementation of CSI include a Ministerial Panel, Senior Officials Steering Group, Advisory Panel of practitioners and experts and Funders Group.

11. OPTIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF FUNDING AND POLICY ADVICE

Options for advice and funding that the Government may procure include:

- Advisory Panel of good relations practitioners, academics and others;
- Procurement of services from organisations;
- The Community Relations Council becomes a statutory non-departmental public body.

12. OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF OFMDFM FUNDING FOR GOOD RELATIONS WORK

The effective delivery of funding is vital in supporting community and voluntary work to deliver Good Relations and in shaping a better future.

CSI will provide for better working of funding in partnership with the community and voluntary sector.

3 levels of funding have been identified:

Local District Council

Funding arrangements continue in their current form for 2010/2011 with a review in 2011/12 to identify recommendations;

Thematic

Funding delivered by a body like the Community Relations Council or through contracted organisations with proven track records and local knowledge.

Targeted And Emergency

Ministers retain the flexibility to provide, in exceptional circumstances, small amounts of funding for reactive, innovative work and 'one off events' that could encourage communities to engage in longer term relationship building work.

Here are some questions to consider once you have read the CSI document:

QUESTIONS

Initial Comments

- What do you feel are the strengths and weaknesses of CSI?
- What needs to be changed, removed or added?
- What does the document mean by 'Cohesion, Sharing and Integration'? Is this reflected in the document?
- What does Short, Medium and Long Term mean in Section 2 - 'Political Leadership and Community Engagement' section?

Building a Shared Future

- Does CSI provide a route map towards a better, shared, cohesive society?
- Does CSI provide a full picture or merely aspects of the process of building that better future?
- Is CSI better or more coherent than the Shared Future document?

Context for the wider community

- What are the challenges of implementing CSI in the current financial context?
- Does CSI provide sufficient acknowledgement for the contribution of the voluntary and community sectors?
- CSI places responsibility on politicians to build a shared future but does it adequately reflect the role of wider society?
- Churches are mentioned in a consultative role. Is this sufficient?
- The needs and roles of groups including victims and survivors, ex-combatants and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual communities are not directly addressed; should they be?

- What does “the relationship between young people and the community” mean in the section 2 - ‘Political Leadership and Community Engagement’?
- Are the needs and roles of young people represented appropriately?

Structural Implications

- CSI emphasises cross-departmental support. Can this be delivered?
- Should CRC be given a more clearly defined role given its previous track record in the delivery of support to community relations?

NOTES

