A GOOD RELATIONS FRAMEWORK

An approach to the development of Good Relations

Community Relations Council

Diversity
Equity
Interdependence

Community Relations Council

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Foreword

The promotion of good relations in Northern Ireland is complex. It requires an understanding of the part that sectarianism and racism play in dividing Northern Ireland society and an ability to see beyond this division towards a society that makes the most of difference and appreciates our diversity, with all its challenges. Good Relations is about that vision of a new society. Such a vision goes beyond legal requirements and asks fundamental questions about the way we organise and run our organisations and services. It challenges basic assumptions about how we deliver a service and it encourages us to recognise the consequences of present and past division while allowing us to deal with these realities. Those who have worked on anti-racism and anti-sectarianism approaches in Northern Ireland have acquired decades of experience. The promotion of good relations requires that both these areas of expertise be joined together to provide an approach that will enable racism and sectarianism to be addressed equally and together. Northern Ireland is a deeply sectarian and racist society in its beliefs and attitudes. These are uncomfortable realities for everyone to face, but the promotion of good relations gives us an opportunity to confront them in a strategic way.

A Good Relations Framework offers an approach to the implementation of good relations practice. Section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory obligation on public bodies to promote good relations but the principles underpinning the legislation can guide any organisation, statutory or otherwise, that wishes to incorporate the values of good relations in its work. **Public bodies can get advice on the statutory responsibilities arising from Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act from the**

Equality Commission. This guide provides some information on the legal context but its key purpose is to provide a practical framework in which to develop good relations.

A Good Relations Framework has been developed to assist any organisation to address sectarianism and racism within their organisations. It is the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's contribution to this debate.

It is not obligatory nor the only good relations model available, but I hope will be a helpful tool for organisations engaged in good relations work.

The Community Relations Council wishes to thank Joanne Murphy, Council's Policy Development Programme staff and Committee for their contribution to the development and editing of this Framework. But the biggest thanks of all go to those public sector organisations and staff who gave their honest and helpful views and guidance throughout the consultation process.

I hope you find *A Good Relations Framework* a useful tool for developing good relations approaches in your organisation.

Dr. Duncan Morrow
Chief Executive Officer

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PART 1
Good Relations: Some Questions and Answers

Why is this relevant to my organisation?

All organisations in Northern Ireland have paid, and continue to pay, a heavy price for ongoing

- sectarianism and racism through;

- loss of lives, jobs, home

- injury, illness, absenteeism

- destruction of business premises

- lack of inward investment

- loss of expertise and innovation through emigration

- multiple delivery of services

- reduced productivity and efficiency etc.

Incidents of sectarianism and racism are commonplace. There is evidence to suggest that racist beliefs are even more widely held (and acted upon) than more obvious sectarian onesi. Unless both are addressed simultaneously the situation will not improve. *A Good Relations Framework* aims to assist organisations and individuals to address these issues in a proactive and strategic way.

Good relations is not only a statutory duty but is also a commitment to corporate governance, social responsibility and to best management practice. All organisations can benefit from pro-active good relations policies and it is in the interest of no organisation to be perceived as having little regard for the promotion of good relations. Put simply, good relations is good business and management practice.

Towards a Definition of the Promotion of Good Relations…

An agreed definition for the promotion of good relations does not currently exist. Therefore, until such times as there may be a more common definition and approach, all people, organisations and institutions will define good relations differently. Organisations will approach this process from their own, unique perspective and with their own particular concerns. For example, words such as sectarianism, racism,

equality and diversity can have different and sometimes, loaded meanings as people work through issues from individual and community viewpoints. Below is a sample definition of the promotion of good relations developed by the Community Relations Council. It is not a description of what good relations has to or should be; rather it is designed to act as a starting point for discussion and debate.

The promotion of good relations is about breaking through the denial and avoidance of sectarianism and racism in Northern Ireland by acknowledging its impact on society and the organisations working within it. It states a public commitment to these beliefs and continually seeks ways to build on them for the future.

Sample Definition of the Promotion of Good Relations
"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"

The Community Relations Council believes that Good Relations is a developmental process and not a prescriptive one. It should run through an organisation's entire corporate identity and become an integral part of its equality systems.

- Section 75 (2) is a legal responsibility but its effective implementation should lead to a more cost effective delivery of services in a more equitable manner, saving time, money and resources and building better relationships.

- Good relations is proactive and preventative work which builds equality, reconciliation and an appreciation of diversity at an organisational level.

- All organisations can, and should, benefit from a pro-active good relations policy for good relations means good business practice.

- Good relations and equality go hand in hand. Equality cannot stand alone without the reinforcing scaffolding of good relations. Real equality needs good relations to underpin and strengthen it.

- Good relations is a developmental process and is not prescriptive. It should be mainstreamed throughout an organisations corporate identity.

Because of its mainstreaming ethos, it is vital that each organisation understands and implements this Framework in a way that is specific to and reflective of itself.

Why Good Relations?

Good relations work serves two functions;

• it is proactive and preventative work that is required of public bodies by legislation

• it works to build reconciliation, equality and an appreciation of diversity at an organisational level

Good relations works in practice to create an organisational culture where people are encouraged to express and discuss issues of identity and culture in a safe and welcoming environment. It is also a way to educate staff to be more sensitive to the specific political, religious and cultural differences that may exist within an organisation, and among its customers, suppliers and external environment. This may have very practical implications, for example, is the organisation aware of the major feast days and holidays of other religious faiths? An active awareness of major special days of all faiths ensures that major events are not scheduled on these days and therefore respect is shown to alternative cultures and traditions. This is a simple, yet important, practical step and not difficult to implement if you consider that almost all desk diaries list major religious holidays (Christian and non-Christian).

Addressing Racism and Sectarianism Together

Good relations is not just about dealing with sectarianism and racism. It is a complex process through which issues of prejudice, conflict and flawed relationships can be addressed. It can also be a positive, enriching and rewarding process for organisations. Many people would say that racism and sectarianism are not the only prejudices that exist in Northern Ireland. However racism and sectarianism are the key issues that arise from Section 75(2) and are the focus of this Framework. Before looking at how *A Good Relations Framework* can help you and your organisation to address racism and sectarianism, it may be helpful to define both of these terms.

Defining Sectarianism

Ken Logue in his publication entitled 'Anti-Sectarian Work – A Framework for Action' defines sectarianism in these terms;

'Sectarianism in the context of Northern Ireland is discrimination arising from political or religious prejudice, leading to relationships of distrust between the two major politico-religious communities. Sectarianism is not just a matter of economic, social or political consideration; nor is it simply a question of personal attitudes or behaviour. It is an historical and cultural phenomenon arising out of political and religious differences and perpetuated by group and self interest[ii].

You will see from this definition that Logue clearly identifies political and religious prejudice as the identifiers of sectarianism. He also identifies the outcome of sectarianism in Northern Ireland as one of 'distrust' between the two main communities (British unionist, majority Protestant and Irish nationalist, majority Catholic). It is this issue of 'distrust' that begins to be addressed by good relations.

Sectarianism beyond the two main communities

In Northern Ireland sectarianism isn't just confined to flawed relationships between Protestants and Catholics, British unionists and Irish nationalists. In fact it refers to any form of discrimination or disadvantage suffered by someone because of their religious beliefs. Many people in Northern Ireland see themselves as belonging to a minority religious faith e.g. Muslim, Bahá'í or Judaism. Therefore, in order to have a fuller understanding of the problems that sectarianism causes it is important to recognise that sectarianism goes beyond intra-Christian conflict.

Defining Racism

Paul Connolly in his report on 'Race and Racism in Northern Ireland' (2002) defines racism as

' a collective term that refers to all those ideas, beliefs, actions, customs, practices and policies that have the effect of disadvantaging and/or discriminating against members of particular ethnic groups'.

He goes on to state;

'The defining feature of racism is therefore the outcomes of particular activities rather than whether those responsible for such activities intentionally wish to disadvantage or discriminate against others'[iii].

Other definitions should also be taken into consideration. For example, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) defines 'racism' as 'the belief that a ground such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin justifies contempt for a person or group of persons, or the notion of superiority of a person or a group of persons. The Commission notes that 'since all human beings belong to the same species, ECRI rejects theories based on the existence of different "races"…ECRI uses this term in order to ensure that those persons who are…erroneously perceived as belonging to "another race" are not excluded from the protection provided for by the legislation.'

What is Institutional Racism?

Institutional racism was defined by the McPherson report as

'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping, which disadvantage minority ethnic people'.

It is clear that organisations or institutions do not necessarily need to discriminate deliberately to be guilty of institutional racism. This Framework aims to clarify the steps that organisations could take to promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The promotion of good relations is a social responsibility but in some cases it is also a statutory duty. The promotion of good relations by public authorities is a requirement of Section 75 (2) of the NI Act.

Section 75 (1) and (2): How did they arise?

Since the mid 1990s Northern Ireland's political, social and legislative environment has been rapidly changing. The Agreement reached in Multi-Party talks (referred to as the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement) its subsequent endorsement through referendum and the devolution of power to a locally elected Assembly saw Northern Ireland move from an unstable political environment, governed by direct rule from London, to a scarcely more stable devolved administration. In the midst of this political change, legislative developments (vis-à-vis the Northern Ireland Act 1998) also changed the context in which organisations needed to look at issues of equality, diversity and their role in the promotion of good relations between those of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

What does Section 75 Say?

Section 75 (1)

A public authority shall in carrying out its functions in relation 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.

Section 75 (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*.

Separating out Statutory Duty 1 from Duty 2

Equality legislation can enforce minimum standards of acceptable behaviour and practice in relation to equality of opportunity, harassment and unfair treatment. However, in order to make legislation more effective it must be accompanied by additional work which looks beyond bare legal requirements and towards a model of promoting diversity and good relations in a way that is specific and cognisant of the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland. Section 75 (1) and (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (NI Act) recognise both the legislative requirements of equality and the more complex requirements of good relations.

In accordance with these statutory requirements each designated public authority has produced an Equality Scheme stating how they propose to fulfil these duties.

Most Equality Schemes quote Section 75(2) directly from the NI Act. The wording used is less specific than Section 75 (1) and may be interpreted less clearly. However, **the promotion of good relations is written into the NI Act as a statutory duty on public authorities and is a requirement within Equality Schemes**.

The changing political environment of Northern Ireland in the past number of years and the introduction of Section 75 has provided an opportunity for organisations to question their existing practice, acknowledge good practices already developed, and encourage new approaches to interaction with and between its staff, and with the people it serves. Section 75 (2) is a legal responsibility for many organisations but its effective implementation should also lead, in the longer term, to a more cost effective delivery of services in a more equitable manner, saving time and money as well cutting down on multiple delivery of services and building better relationships. The NI Act places on public bodies a duty to promote diversity under Section 75. However *A Good Relations Framework* asks us to go beyond minimum standards for coexistence to a recognition and celebration of our shared existence and interdependency.

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PART 2
Introducing the Framework into Your Organisation

The Purpose of *A Good Relations Framework*

This Framework aims to address the promotion of good relations through a process of facilitation and development with recognised, measurable outcomes. **Any policies which result from the adoption of this Framework must be screened for equality impact assessment according to the guidance issued by the Equality Commission.**

Facilitation, Developmental Assumptions and Outcomes

A Good Relations Framework can **facilitate** organisations to:

- Produce a statement of commitment to promote good relations as required by the NI Act, and to recognise that good relations can only be encouraged and sustained if it is built upon equality as required by the legislation.

- Carry out an internal and external audit in order to determine the state of relations within organisations and ascertain how these are perceived by the people they serve (by those who hold different religious beliefs, and / or political opinions and / or are members of different racial group).

- Develop understanding, confidence and skill in managing relationships based on the principles of good relations by mainstreaming these principles into their day to day work.

The **development** of this work is based on the following assumptions:

- Statutory organisations, their staff (and indeed all organisations in Northern Ireland) work within a political and cultural climate and need the time, resources and support to reflect on the effects of living and working in such an environment, both in relation to themselves as individuals, their organisation and the broader society. Such reflection informs their professional practice, helps to ensure equality of access to services for their clients, and

illustrates a commitment to equality and better organisational and societal relations

- Organisations using the Framework are willing to participate in the development and implementation of the audit, training programme and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of *A Good Relations Framework*

- Good relations training will be conducted as a follow up to the Framework process, and where necessary and where identified ,through the outworking of the Framework

The **outcomes** of this work are:

- A better understanding of the political, religious and racial diversity within each organisation and its staff and the challenge this poses

- A higher level of confidence in identity as individuals and as an organisation

- Personal development of staff members within participant organisations and increased understanding of good relations obligations

- The creation / strengthening of safe and secure environments which enable and encourage staff and client group to challenge sectarianism and racism

- Increased trust, contact, knowledge and understanding of other staff members and client group

- Building working partnerships with organisations delivering good relations training and support

- Safer and more welcoming premises which openly and actively promote good relations

- Structured procedures to promote and support good relations work

- Better relations with the local neighbourhood and wider society

- *A Good Relations Framework* **aims to address the promotion of good relations through a process of facilitation and development with recognised, measurable outcomes**

- **The Framework facilitates organisations to: produce a statement of commitment to good relations, to carry out internal and external audits and develop an understanding of managing relationships within their everyday work**

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PART 3
The Framework Process

Step 1   Sample statement of commitment to Promoting Good Relations

Step 2   The Auditing Framework: Internal and External Perspectives

Step 3   Supporting and Managing Good Relations through Training

Step 4   Mainstreaming Good Relations and Delivering Change

Step 5   Monitoring and Evaluation of Good Relations

Commitment to Promoting Good Relations

The Community Relations Council believes that all good relations work exists within a developmental process. Developing a sample statement of commitment to good relations is the vital first step on this road. It is acknowledged that for some organisations such a step is more difficult than for others.

The Statement of Commitment Process

The process of developing a sample statement of commitment for organisations should include a fully facilitated discussion covering all aspects of good relations, as well as looking at it within the context of the particular organisational setting.

A Sample Statement of Commitment to Promoting Good Relations

"This organisation wishes to publicly outline its commitment to the promotion of good relations between persons of differing religious belief, political opinion or racial group. It is committed to challenging sectarianism and racism and believes that good relations is inextricably linked with equality of opportunity."

The Auditing Framework: Internal and External Perspectives

In order to initiate *A Good Relations Framework*, organisations need to undertake internal and external audits of the organisation.

Internal Audit

The internal audit will seek to determine the state of relations within the organisation.

External audit

The external audit will seek to ascertain how the organisation is perceived by those of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

A Good Relations Framework recommends that audits should be carried out by independent assessors. Some large organisations may have the expertise internally and are thus able to establish a self-evaluation procedure to support external audit in the short term. Audit questions (both internal and external) will necessarily be specific to each organisation involved and the following section can be used as a helpful resource in the development of organisational audits.

Audit Methodologies

There is no fixed methodology to carry out this type of work but there are some suggestions which come from experience. The Community Relations Council would encourage organisations to consider using some of the following options:

Desk research: Researching existing internal and external information through reports, publications and other relevant data such as census returns.

Questionnaires: These can be a good method of collecting factual information but can be less effective at bringing out information about perceptions (the Life

and Times survey may also be a useful tool). A lot of issues which are important to the promotion of good relations have to do with perceptions of people, areas, organisations etc. and whether they are welcoming or not, or whether people feel they belong to an area or merely tolerated.

Structured interviews: These are interviews by a researcher with members of staff, management and other relevant people. Questions of perception can be asked in a confidential manner, thus raising the issues without identifying the source.

Focus groups: These are meetings of particular groups of people, e.g. staff who work in a team. They are facilitated by a researcher and allow for a discussion of issues of interest to that particular group. Not only do they allow a discussion of sometimes sensitive issues but they can also enable issues to be seen from the viewpoint of that group which might be lost in a more general examination. Some members of the Group may feel unable or unwilling to talk about sensitive issues in a group setting. It is important to provide ground rules/guiding principles and a safe and supportive environment to enable open but confidential discussion.

Combination: None of the methods outlined above are exclusive; indeed, an audit may well be a combination of all of them. Some organisations may find it useful to carry out a survey by questionnaire, collate the results and then use interviews and focus groups as a means to examine the issues raised across the staff and client groups.

Information: It is important that staff and participating client groups are fully informed and understand why the audit is taking place and the advantages for them in raising and discussing issues. Trade Unions and staff representative structures should be involved from the start of the process. Their involvement is not only good practice but it can also

help the flow of information and reduce the development of rumours. *No communication network within an organisation is more effective than the informal one that exists between staff at every level.* It is vital that people get as much information about the audit as they need, when they want it and from a reliable source. Information distribution systems such as team briefings, staff meetings, newsletters, bulletin boards etc, should be used for this purpose.

Uncovering Hurts: It is possible that as a result of asking questions and raising issues existing hurts among staff and clients may be revealed. It is important that the researcher is able to respond to these in a sensitive way so that any necessary action by the organisation is taken and support is given to the individual(s) or group(s) concerned. If this is not done then the chances of developing effective policies and procedures can be reduced or restricted.

Staff Involvement: Staff have the advantage of knowing the organisation and the business they are in, but they are also part of the organisation and may be reticent to discuss potentially contentious issues with another colleague. Staff, particularly senior staff, are themselves participants within the process and it may be important to engage an external facilitator. However, some of the bigger organisations already employ experienced facilitators who engage with the majority of staff on a day to day basis, for example, trainers or equality officers.

What experience do researchers/facilitators need?

It is important that:

a) Researchers are able to deal with the potentially contentious issues that might come up in a sensitive and professional manner.

b) They can be trusted and can keep confidences.

c) They have an understanding of the organisation, and knowledge of the area.

Management of Audit

The audit will be as comprehensive and useful to the organisation as the effort the organisation puts into it through all stages of the process. This means that the management of any audit is important. Below are some of the issues that should be considered.

Remit: The organisation will be required to draw up a remit for the audit research. This will outline the nature of the questions it wants to ask. For example, if it is looking at the potential effects of sectarian division or racial stereotyping then this must be carefully planned and explained.

Timetable: A timetable for the audit needs to be worked out between the organisation and the person responsible for carrying it out. This should include regular meetings, agreement about the methodology, reports etc.

Reference Group: A reference group should be established consisting of representatives from e.g. staff, management, trade unions, clients, community leaders and civic leaders (where appropriate).

This reference group should aim to include people representative of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, gender etc. It also needs to be able to discuss issues of difference in an open and inclusive way.

Ownership: It is important that the audit is led and seen to be led by the senior management team, (including members of any board with in the organisation) and that they understand that it concerns them as much as everyone else. Division and prejudice are not confined to any one group or sector, they can be found anywhere.

How do you select a researcher/consultant?

Various bodies can advise on the selection of consultants. See *Appendix One: Useful Contacts and Resources*. You may also want to look at work done by other public bodies, voluntary organisations and community groups.

What Issues should the Audit look at?

It is important that audit questions are tailored to suit each organisation and acknowledge past work and best practice in the field of good relations. For example, some organisations may have a history of engaging with community relations / minority ethnic organisations that specialise in anti-sectarian and/or anti-racism work. Past experience should be built upon and could be replicated in other parts of the organisation and used as models of good practice by other organisations. Some organisations, however, may still be at an early stage in this process and be more dependent on the experience of others. While questions may seem general at times, they are again, just one part of a wider process. More specific questions may arise and will be dictated by the particular organisation. Audit questions are also designed to be viewed as part of the evaluation and monitoring procedure. For ease of use issues to be addressed within internal and external audits have been formulated within the following five categories.

The audits should examine all activities in relation to

a) Organisation

b) Staff

c) Client group (including suppliers, contractors, customers etc)

d) General public

e) Public relations

A.   Organisation

Policy and procedures

- What written procedures does the organisation already have for promoting good relations?

- How are staff trained and supported to put this procedure into practice?

- Is the client group, suppliers and all other relevant organisations aware of the organisations promoting good relations policies?

- Is the procedure included in the organisation's induction pack?

- What type of safe and supportive environment exists for staff and client groups to engage in the promotion of good relations or to raise issues of concern?

- Does the organisation have adequate policies and procedures for the removal of sectarian/ racist graffiti etc?

- Does the organisation have agreed policies and positions on contentious flags and symbols and are these policies communicated effectively to staff, client groups and the general public?

Management structures and systems

- Does the organisation know enough about its staff and the people its serves to provide an effective good relations policy?

- Does the organisation actively engage with community groups / those representing different religious beliefs / minority ethnic groups / those with different political beliefs?

- How does management endeavour to reflect a fair balance of representation across all the people it serves?

- How do management structures and systems encourage client groups to develop good relations policies and put these into practice?

- What support systems are in place within the organisation to address issues arising from good relations training and implementation?

- How does management create an ethos and awareness of good relations which challenges sectarianism and racism throughout the organisation and its client groups?

- How does management acknowledge, promote and document good practice?

- How does management facilitate the development of a climate of trust and openness which respects difference, values diversity and encourages open discussion?

Service development and delivery

How does the organisation acknowledge that sectarianism and racism may impact / may have impacted on its services and is this addressed in policy decisions, service development and monitoring?
How do client groups view the organisation's services with regard to the promotion of good relations?
Do existing client groups adequately reflect minority religious, political and minority ethnic viewpoints?
What criteria is applied to enable the organisation to provide resources in a balanced and fair way?
Does this criteria actively recognise and seek to include those with different minority religious, minority ethnic or political views?

How does the organisation ensure that staff, service users, suppliers and client groups feel comfortable and welcome in its offices, resource centres, etc.?
How does the organisation prominently display its commitment to promoting good relations in its facilities?

B.   Staff

Personnel
- How does the organisation ensure that it is representative of all sections of society?

- What mechanism exists for the regular review and evaluation of the organisation's workforce profile, which enables affirmative action to be taken promptly to redress any imbalance?

- How does the organisation give consideration to how sectarianism and racism affects / may have affected performance, morale, motivation, teamwork and absenteeism linked to ongoing sectarianism, racism or the legacy of hurt arising from the 'troubles'?

- What support and supervision systems are in place to take account of the fact that most staff live and work in a deeply divided society which also has high levels of racism?

- Do support and supervision systems take into account the possibility that staff may have suffered (are suffering) from the legacy of violent conflict, and/or racist discrimination?

- How do staff, particularly managers, lead by example, in demonstrating good practice and challenging sectarianism and racism in the workplace?

- How are staff supported to deal with any physical threat to their well being or the possibility of sectarian / racist harassment while working within the community?

Training
- How does the organisation show its commitment to providing resources for relevant and applicable good relations training for management and staff?

- How does the organisation demonstrate that training is essential to address the personal issues for staff, who may have inbuilt, unacknowledged prejudices due to their upbringing in a deeply divided society with high levels of racism and prejudice against those of other faiths and political opinion?

- How does the organisation ensure that those on placements with the organisation have similar access to training for good relations available to all staff?

- How does the organisation promote and provide training that recognises the diversity of the workforce and fully acknowledges the benefits to the organisation?

- How are staff trained and supported to understand and respect differences in race, political opinion and religion?

- Is training made part of an integrated approach to promotion of good relations throughout the organisation, and not seen as an isolated activity?

C.   Client Group

- When contracting with other bodies does the organisation require them to demonstrate a commitment to challenging sectarianism / racism and promoting good relations in all aspects of their work?

- How does the organisation ensure that grant aid contract procedures and other resource distribution processes are implemented on a fair and equitable basis?

- When working with community groups and inter-agency partnerships how does the organisation learn from this more direct experience of community division, and race discrimination?

- How are the client groups made aware of the organisation's commitment to promoting good relations?

- How are the needs of all NI communities respected and taken into account so as to influence the organisation's services and policy direction?

D.   General public

- How does the organisation monitor and evaluate regular customer satisfaction about its good relations policies?

- How does the organisation monitor and evaluate the contribution to the achievement of good relations objectives of all of its projects, events, programmes and strategies?

- Does the organisation promote its good relations performance using all appropriate media?

- How does the organisation assess how the general public view its services?

E.   Public Relations

- How does the organisation's public relations initiatives reflect the value base of the organisation and inform the public about the organisation's commitment to promoting good relations?

- How do the organisation's publications comment on policy issues relating to Northern Ireland society, while identifying the organisation's commitment to promoting good relations?

- How does the organisation respond to individuals, groups, communities and organisations at times of stress and difficulties caused by the 'troubles' / incidents of racism, faith based prejudice?

- How will staff and client groups be consulted in relation to the organisation's implementation of *A Good Relations Framework*?

Step 3 Supporting and Managing Good Relations through Training

Audit Outcomes
It is envisaged that the key outcomes of the audit process will highlight the need for:

- the development of organisational structures to ensure the effective implementation and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the promotion of good relations

- a rolling good relations training programme

Training needs
The training needs of all organisations are different. However, training programmes can be put in place which address specific organisational requirements within a general training framework. Some organisations will have in-house training expertise that can be utilised and any opportunities for capacity building within existing training structures should be maximised to the full. Good relations should be mainstreamed and while it is almost certain that some external facilitation will be required, training of internal trainers is a key component to the success and promotion of good relations.

Step 4 Mainstreaming Good Relations and Delivering Change

Mainstreaming Good Relations

For the promotion of good relations to be effective it needs to be carefully and strategically mainstreamed into every component part of the organisation. In the opinion of the Community Relations Council, this means seeing good relations as an integral part of planning and strategy and not as an add-on. For almost all organisations in Northern Ireland this requires new and innovative thinking and goes against 'traditional' ways of doing things. To promote good relations requires a change in an organisations culture (especially the 'tacit' culture with which organisations tend to operate internally), and the integration of good relations models into the core business practice. It means recognising the uncomfortable reality of sectarianism and racism and the decisions that people and organisations have made historically in the midst of that reality. It needs a re-examination of these decisions in the light of a commitment to promoting good relations and information gathered through the auditing process. Most of all it requires action to ameliorate the effects of negative relationships and a responsibility to address problems of division at an organisational level. None of this work is easy, but it is necessary and represents a real commitment to a different organisational culture and, in the long term, a better working environment, and ultimately a better society.

Delivering Change

Introducing the promotion of good relations into an organisation begins a process of change. It is important that good relations is recognised as such a process and treated accordingly. This means ensuring not only that the change process is communicated effectively, but that it is led and driven throughout the organisation in an appropriate way. McCallum, in his analysis of change processes within organisations makes this comment;

"There is at least one constant: People do not like change. They never have and they never will"iv

However, there are a number of simple actions which can make any process of change easier, more effective and therefore more likely to 'stick'.

Communication

No communications network in an organisation is as effective as the informal one between staff at all levels. Unless a policy is in place, to communicate with all staff well in advance of action, your organisation could endanger the promotion of good relations even before work has begun. Good relations should enhance your organisation and the way in which it performs as an organic and continuously learning unit. Open communication from the onset is the start of that process.

Leadership

Leadership is a key element in the successful promotion, introduction and delivery of good relations. It is not only leadership from the top that is important, the role of managers, team leaders, trade union and staff representatives is equally vital. Care should be taken at an early stage to identify and support such individuals in their role as 'advocates' for good relations, and continue to support them as the process develops. Obviously it is envisaged that many of these people would be part of the reference group referred to in Step 2.

Key Change 'drivers'

It is vital for the success of *A Good Relations Framework* that it is 'driven' through the organisation by someone who has specific responsibility for it and the credibility to tie together the different strands of the process. The Community Relations Council would maintain that this person needs to be at a high level within the organisation and that they must be prepared and able to prioritise the promotion of good relations, at least in the short to medium term.

Monitoring and Evaluation is a key component of good relations work. However, because it deals with *attitudes* as well as *actions*, the Section 75(2) good relations duty) warrants a different monitoring and evaluation structure than the Section 75 (1) equality duty. However, effective monitoring and evaluation is both necessary, to comply with legislation, and desirable because it facilitates the development of good relations work within an organisation.

It is the opinion of the Community Relations Council that while the promotion of good relations should be Equality Impact Assessed within the context of each organisation's equality scheme, monitoring and evaluation should also take into consideration indicators which look specifically at good relations, its development and ongoing concerns.

Indicator Characteristics

It is important that these indicators are;

- **flexible** enough to measure the diverse range of good relations approaches

- **probing** enough to identify models of good practice and learn the lessons of failure

- **unobtrusive** on the work of the organisation but effective enough to illustrate the overall picture

- **adaptable** to change to meet the needs of organisations and learn from other or new methods of assessment

- **holistic** in relation to demonstrating how the organisation reached its goal.

The Focus of Good Relations Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective monitoring and evaluation will focus on:

1 internal good relations aims, target group and intended goals

2 external impact of good relations work on wider community in relation to the impact assessed organisation

The Audit Process and Monitoring and Evaluation – A Linked Approach

The good relations Audit as defined in Step 2, is not only a mechanism with which to measure an organisation's position with regard to good relations but also a tool for evaluating the impact of policies, procedures and organisational development. Audit questions are designed to be used alongside the monitoring and evaluation themes below, as a yardstick with which to measure an organisation's development.

Key Monitoring and Evaluation Themes

While relating specifically to the promotion of good relations, the five themes highlighted below should be mainstreamed into on-going monitoring and evaluation within the wider organisation. As such good relations monitoring and evaluation should become an integral part of the organisation's equality and good relations work.

What follows are some examples of what can be measured and a brief outline of appropriate methodologies.

1. Awareness raising, better understanding and acceptance of 'others'

Observing and recording changes in

- behaviour – less sectarian and / or racist incidents reported / recorded

- attitude – learning from the past and preparing for a non-sectarian and non-racist future through personal and organisational development

- belief – changing or opening minds about previously held conceptions or opinions

- communication – listening, hearing and discussing experiences and opinions about 'taboo' subjects in a safe and supportive environment

- relationships – breaking through the 'chill factor' and communicating and building networks with former adversaries

Example
Changes in attitude / belief / communication and relationships can be measured through audits, evaluation of training and personal development work. This is perhaps the most challenging of all the themes, but also the most useful in assessing a change in attitudes.

2. Improved and developing relationships

- more considered and calmer reactions and responses to situations with a potential to damage good relations

- visible personal and group actions demonstrating goodwill

- lessons learned from the experience and skills of the voluntary and community sectors in dealing with sectarianism and racism
- public and voluntary/community sector mirroring good relations approaches

Example
Visible personal and group actions demonstrating goodwill (for example, voluntary groups meeting more readily and engaging in productive interaction on difficult issues within and external to the organisation) can be measured through medium and long term qualitative analysis of particular issues or circumstances

3. Acceptance and implementation of good relations approaches

- developing and strengthening internal good relations programmes and approaches

- implementing internal structures to support, manage and maintain internal good relations programmes and approaches

- acknowledgement and visible support of the anti-sectarianism and anti-racist work and programmes developed by the voluntary/community sector

- dealing with contentious issues through the good relations agenda

- setting in place early warning or preventative systems i.e. proactive as well as reactive

Example
The development of internal mainstreaming mechanisms for good relations can be measured through an organisational analysis of past policy objectives in comparison to present and future objectives with good relations as the new, central component.

4. Increased recognition, demand and support for good relations initiatives

- more participation, demand and support for increased or improved good relations training, projects, meetings etc.

- use of voluntary/community sector organisations working in the field of good relations

- evidence of training and processes being used positively to promote good relations

- more open discussion about good relations issues both internally and externally

Example
More participation in and demand for good relations training, projects, meetings, etc can be measured through an analysis of organisational behaviour internally and careful monitoring of interaction (either through staff or programmes) between the organisation and the wider community.

5. Positive impact of good relations initiatives

• models of good practice developed

• improved use of services

• staff approach more informed and understanding

• positive reflection on organisation's image

• use of language promoting good relations

• creation of good relations networks

• development of conflict management and support systems for good relations

• example set by public body to others in government, in the public and voluntary/community sectors and within client group

• positive reflections from those involved in and/or affected by, good relations approaches either verbally, in written form, through art or by video

• replication of approaches developed in other organisations

• time and energy given by participants

• development of good relations in leadership activities

• people prepared to participate and take risks e.g. by sharing opinions, experiences and hearing opposing views

• having key personnel involved and promoting good relations from the top down

• taking a holistic view about participation and recognising that the public sector is part of the solution to addressing bad relations

• openly acknowledging and valuing good relations

Example
Models of good practice that are developed can be measured by a longitudinal, qualitative analysis of individual case studies. This requires careful recording of
case study development at regular intervals as well as the use of audit and other methodologies.

Measuring Change
A number of methodological approaches can be used to measure the impact of good relations policy within an organisation. However, effectively measuring impact does require a degree of creativity and openness to new approaches since it is often changes in attitudes as well as behaviour which is being measured. Such measurement is a learning process for everyone involved and requires mechanisms, which are fluid and adaptable.

A number of possible approaches are outlined below. It is anticipated that organisations will require some ongoing guidance to implement these methodologies.

Some Notes on Methodologies

• Case Studies

Longitudinal qualitative analysis can be a very useful mechanism for observing and documenting change in good relations within your organisation. Case studies can look at the development of particular issues or groups over an extended period of time and reflect the difficult reality of making progress with good relations work. However, case studies require a commitment to measure over an extended timeframe and as such, while useful, are a long term approach requiring regular monitoring and documentation.

• Verbal feedback

Verbal feedback should be freely available within your organisation but in order for it to be used as an effective measuring tool needs to be formalised and recorded through a questionnaire, structured or semi-structured interview process. It is also vital that the person collecting feedback has an understanding of the issues around good relations and confidentiality within the organisation.

• Observations

Informal observations are often some of the most telling but least quantifiable way, of assessing an organisation's progress when promoting good relations. But what one person observes acutely another may fail to notice, and observational processes should only be used as a way of raising issues to be addressed in other, more measurable ways.

• Content analysis of media coverage

Some organisations receive a lot of media coverage which often reflects the perception of that organisation in the wider society, or within particular communities. A content analysis of media coverage plotted alongside any change in the perception of an organisation within that coverage may indicate changing attitudes within society or particular communities, raising issues that need to be addressed.

• Surveys, questionnaires, statistical data and audits

Obviously surveys, questionnaires, statistical data and audits are all useful information gathering processes and will make up the main data collection 'toolkit' for measuring the impact of good relations work. As all these approaches work slightly differently and are suitable in different circumstances decisions to use a methodology or utilise existing information must be taken in light of on-going work.

How to Begin the Monitoring Process?

• Internal and external audits defined at Step 2 could provide a baseline for analysis

• It's important to define what you want to measure internally and externally. For example, it is possible to track attitudinal change, reduction in attacks on property, change in physical environment, changes in perception of your organisation and / or reduction in racist / sectarian incidents.

• It's equally important to define what your priorities are in terms of monitoring. No one has unlimited time and resources so strategic decisions about key issues are vital for your organisation to get the information it wants and needs.

How Frequent and in depth should the Monitoring Process be?

• Decisions need to be made about how often monitoring and evaluation of good relations policies will take place and how in depth it will be.

• Is it your aim to keep your good relations commitments 'ticking over' or to establish a best practice model? Each organisation will approach this differently but all will gather together a body of learning unique to them.

• Will your emphasis be on internal or external monitoring or a bit of both? Again this comes back to the strategic requirements of your organisation and your needs at particular times.

• What will you do with monitoring information? Are you committed to recording and writing up processes? Are you willing to make models of good practice available to other organisations in your area or sector?

The Framework process advocated by the Community Relations Council consists of five steps

Step 1 – **The Development of a Statement of Commitment to Promoting Good Relations**

Step 2 – **Auditing Internally and Externally**

Step 3 – **The Development of Appropriate Training**

Step 4 – **Mainstreaming Good Relations and Delivering Change**

Step 5 – **Monitoring and Evaluation of Good Relations within Organisations**

4

PART 4
Conclusion

The current NI Programme for Government (2002) looks forward to '*a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society, firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust, and the protection and vindication of human rights for all*'.

Good relations is an integral part of this objective. Implementing legislation on equality of opportunity is only really effective when it is reinforced by a commitment to promoting good relations and recognising the value of differences in the growing array of political opinion, religious belief and racial group. It is the intention of the Community Relations Council that *A Good Relations Framework* should facilitate organisations to build on existing work and become good relations innovators in our rapidly changing society. Council would draw attention, however, to the fact that the Equality Commission remains the statutory agency responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of Section 75 (2). As such, Council is minded to make organisations that might choose to implement the policies proposed in this document aware that consideration must be given to any specific guidance on the implementation of the good relations duty provided by the Commission.

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APPENDIX 1

What to do when religious belief / political opinion / racial group become an urgent issue within an organisation

Short, Medium and Long Term Approaches to the Realities of Sectarian / Racist Behaviour

Within all organisations events occur which bring the issue of good relations to the forefront of thinking. This may occur as the result of an internal incident which is racist or sectarian in nature, or because of external circumstances which impact on how the organisation can do its job. Whether internal or external in origin they have the potential to do immense damage to the good relations already established and the reputation of the organisation within wider society. Such incidents need to be addressed quickly as consequences can often be ameliorated with swift action. However, this initial period of activity is not enough. The following section looks at short, medium and long term approaches to dealing with the consequences of bad relations.

Short Term

Immediate responses to internal incident and/or external environment change

Internal

- Assess quickly and as comprehensively as possible, the impact of the incident on 1) the organisation as a whole 2) the individual department / team/ working group/ individual member of staff (if appropriate)

- Put in place immediate mechanisms to prevent a recurrence of incident, if possible, and monitor effect of current incident within organisation

- Take any necessary disciplinary steps immediately

- Consider the use of professional facilitation

External

- Assess as quickly as possible the immediate and possibly on-going impact of the external factor and its relationship to the organisation

- Allow the opportunity for discussion of issues to take place quickly and for everyone to take part using professional facilitation if necessary

- Put in place mechanisms for evaluating impact of incident and monitoring of its consequences

Medium Term

Ongoing work dealing with contentious issues

- Develop annual evaluative processes and procedures for good relations work

- Ensure procedures operate at different levels within the organisation and regularly make staff formally aware of developments and ask for feedback

- Conduct 'refresher' training on annual basis

- Make questions around good relations one of key components of exit interviews for employees who are leaving the organisation

- Document carefully developments relating to good relations and the outworking of this Framework and other strategies for better relations

Long Term

Strategic development and long term planning

- Add to and if possible improve on, models of best practice in the good relations area

- Document models of best practice / case histories within the organisation

- Mainstream good relations within normal strategic planning process

- Update systems and processes against best practice models

- Communicate with other organisations about good relations work and develop models of good practice

- **Within all organisations** events occurs which bring the issue of good relations to the forefront of thinking.

- **Such incidents need to be addressed quickly as consequences can often be ameliorated by swift action.**

- **The organisation should have to hand guidelines to hand for dealing with such incidents in the short, medium and long term.**

APPENDIX 2

Resources

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Doing Business in a Divided Society, Community Relations Council

Getting off the Fence: Challenging Sectarianism in Personal Social Services, CCETSW

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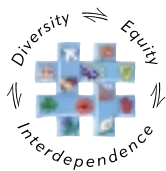
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