

CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL EQUALITY AND SOCIAL NEED RESEARCH AND INFORMATION STRATEGY

2009 - 2011



FOREWORD

This updated research strategy is designed to enhance the information and research base upon which equality and social need policies are developed and evaluated. It aims to promote joined up working between departments by coordinating research efforts and disseminating findings across a wide range of stakeholders.

The Strategy originates from commitments by government to support the research process, improve methodology, identify gaps and develop an equality research and statistical infrastructure. The original Strategy was launched in 2003 and following an evaluation in 2006 has been subjected to revisions designed to improve its strategic position as a cross-departmental resource.

These revisions focus on a number of main themes: renewed emphasis on the strategic priorities underpinning the annual research programme; greater utilisation of existing sources of data; improved dissemination and accessibility; interdisciplinary cooperation; policy relevance; methodological diversity and international comparisons.

It is expected that by promoting these principles they will provide a basis for the development and improvement of the research programme over the period 2009 - 2011, and that the research conducted will provide policy makers with the evidence base required to develop and improve policies that are relevant to equality and social need.



RT HON PETER D ROBINSON MP MLA
First Minister



MARTIN McGUINNESS MP MLA
deputy First Minister

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2003, following a period of consultation, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister published the first cross-Departmental Equality and Social Need Research and Information Strategy covering the period 2003 – 2006.

The Strategy aimed to focus efforts and resources on the research and information requirements of equality and social need related policies and the Statutory Duty as outlined in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998). The Strategy outlined the aims, principles and priority areas in support of these requirements and committed to monitor and evaluate the strategy to enable an update to be prepared to cover the 3-year period 2009 – 2011. The key outcomes of the Strategy evaluation are outlined below¹ in addition to actions taken in response.

In light of the evaluation, it was felt that the original aims, principles and priority areas continued to be highly relevant and did not require significant updating although appropriate developments in these areas are highlighted below. The evaluation did identify specific areas for development and refinement relating in the main to strategic, procedural and presentational issues.

1.2 DEPARTMENTAL GROUPS

Within OFMdfM there are two key cross-Departmental groups tasked with taking forward the broad Equality and Social Need policies and strategies and in providing statistical and research support. The role of each group is outlined below.

1.3 EQUALITY AND SOCIAL NEED STEERING GROUP

The Equality and Social Need Steering Group (ESNSG) is a cross-Departmental group comprising senior officials and chaired by the Head of the Equality Directorate within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMdfM). The Group is tasked with taking forward the broad equality and social need agendas within Government and to maximise the impact of joined-up Government action in the various areas covered by equality and social need.

1.4 EQUALITY AND SOCIAL NEED RESEARCH AND INFORMATION GROUP

The Equality and Social Need Research and Information Group (ESNRIG) is a sub-group to the ESNSG and comprises members of the Northern Ireland

¹ For the full evaluation report see: Evaluation of research and information under the cross-departmental Equality and Social Need Research and Information Strategy, PSC Management Consultants (2006) at www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/equalityresearch

Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), including NISRA representatives outposted in the various Government Departments. In addition, representatives from the Equality Commission, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission are members of the ESNRIG providing an external stakeholder view of the work commissioned by the Group. The primary functions of ESNRIG is to provide research and statistical support to the work of the ESNSG and to ensure that departmental equality and social need issues are mainstreamed within departmental research agendas. This entails liaison with senior policy officials across departments to ensure that research findings are effectively disseminated.

2. OUTCOME OF THE STRATEGY EVALUATION AND RESPONSE

The overall conclusion of the evaluation of the operation of the Strategy for the first 3 years was that it had performed generally well. The Strategy had succeeded in raising research and information issues within Departments and had assisted Departments in meeting their Equality and Social Need responsibilities.

Above and beyond this, and in broad terms, while the Strategy may have generally succeeded in relation to its core aims, principles and priorities in meeting identified policy need, wider awareness of the Strategy and the research and information resources produced were less well developed.

The following specific issues were identified by the evaluation with the responses to them outlined.

2.1. Strategic dimension

Issue:

The evaluation found that the relationship between ESNSG and ESNRIG did not appear to be sufficiently strategic and that there needed to be a renewed emphasis on the strategic importance of the two groups.

Response:

1. Included at Annex A is an outline of research strategy and priorities for 2009 – 2011, formally endorsed by ESNSG and ESNRIG. These priorities have been accepted by policy officials and have been presented to the Senior Management Group of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The principles and priorities will be reviewed every three years. In addition an annual research programme will detail the specific research or statistical work to be completed for that period.

2.2. Departmental ownership

Issue:

The evaluation found a perceived variability in relation to the various Departments' 'ownership' of the Strategy and acknowledged that there were limited resources available to OFMdFM in providing the secretariat and research commissioning function as part of its ESNRIG facilitation role.

Response:

1. Where appropriate, departments to be encouraged to take lead responsibility in the commissioning and management of ESNSG research.
2. The Strategy will be disseminated and promoted by both ESNSG and ESNRIG more broadly as a resource for all Departments. ESNSG members will actively encourage the adoption of the Strategy within their own Departments research and statistical activities.

2.3. Presentation, utilisation, accessibility and dissemination of research and information

Issue:

Presenting the large volume of data and research in appropriate formats.

Response:

1. In future, commissioned research or statistical developments published under the Strategy will be accompanied by a greater range of dissemination methods: presentations, bulletins, research summaries etc.
2. Linkages will be explored with other relevant organisations and stakeholders to ensure that published material is circulated to a broader audience.
3. Future emphasis on utilisation of the existing wealth of data in terms of estimating actual or potential equality and social need impacts and outcomes.

3. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH AND INFORMATION STRATEGY

3.1. The aims of the Cross-Departmental Research and Information Strategy in support of Equality and Social Need remain threefold:

- 1. *To assist our understanding of the extent, distribution and causes of inequality and social exclusion in Northern Ireland society and the consequences of policies and actions aimed at their reduction, and to assess their impact on those affected.***
- 2. *To assist Departments to access the data they need to inform their implementation of 'Lifetime Opportunities', the new anti-poverty strategy for Northern Ireland, and to monitor its impact.***
- 3. *To assist Departments and Public Bodies in complying with their statutory duty under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.***

Whilst the primary aim of the Strategy is to assist Government Departments and Public Bodies in fulfilling their Equality and Social Need responsibilities, it will also contribute to, and facilitate, wider public debate on these issues. In recognition of this, the strategy outputs in relation to commissioned research and statistical developments have been made available through publication either on the OFMdFM research branch website² or, for example, the equality section of the NISRA website³.

To that end, linkages with Community and Voluntary Sector organisations, those individuals affected and the academic research community will continue to be explored to ensure pro-active circulation of Strategy outputs to as broad an audience as possible.

3.2. Research release and publication

In continuing to facilitate open access to research and information outputs, and particularly within the context of UK policy developments in relation to statistical legislation emphasising the separation between ministers and statistical procedures, the current Strategy commits to the publication of all commissioned research within three months of completion and acceptance by the relevant research steering group. The operation of this will be reviewed after 12 months.

² www.research.ofmdfmni.gov.uk

³ www.nisra.gov.uk

3.3. PRINCIPLES OF THE RESEARCH AND INFORMATION STRATEGY

Many of the principles which apply to Government research and statistics more generally apply equally to the research and statistical work carried out as part of the research and information strategy in support of Equality and Social Need.

Research and statistical work conducted under the Strategy will continue to:

Be fit for the purpose: capable of generating reliable and valid conclusions on the basis of robust methods;

Be relevant: in assessing the impact of existing policies and learning lessons for incorporation into future policies in relation to: a) statutory commitments under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act; and b) Equality and anti-poverty policy commitments;

Be based on common and consistent set of definitions of terms;

Not be intrusive: in that it must have respect for an individuals' privacy and Human Rights;

Not place an onerous burden on data providers in that it must not seek more information than is necessary for the intended purpose;

Be conducted with **due regard to obtaining value for taxpayers money;** and

Be conducted in an **open and transparent manner** with results and outputs being **generally available**.

4. PRIORITIES OF THE RESEARCH AND INFORMATION STRATEGY

The ten over-arching principles were originally identified by a cross-departmental group of statisticians and representatives from the voluntary and community sector and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. These were subsequently presented at a public seminar at Queen's University. They are listed below. As principles they do not identify specific research areas. The research themes contained in Annex A attempt to put some flesh on the bones of these principles by identifying a wide-ranging research agenda from which research proposals may be generated.

The original ten principles were considered by the evaluation to be still relevant and are as follows:

Addressing Gaps in Data

Establishing Baselines

Statistical Indicators

Researching Causes and Dynamics

Neighbourhood Focus

Identifying and Addressing Social Exclusion

Researching Community Capacity

Improving Implementation

Identifying Best Practice

Assessing Policy Impact

The evaluation found that the priority areas most commonly supported by research and statistical work completed under the Strategy included: addressing gaps in data; establishing baselines; statistical indicators; researching causes and dynamics; and identifying and addressing social exclusion.

Some areas were less commonly addressed through the Strategy. These included: neighbourhood focus; researching community capacity; improving implementation; identifying best practice and assessing policy impact.

Notwithstanding the specific policy need in respect of the ten priority areas, the 2009 – 2011 Strategy should seek to balance research resources across the priority areas. This will mean taking advantage of any research proposals that focus on the under-developed themes identified in the review of the strategy such as improving implementation and assessing policy impact.

5. FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

5.1. Funding

The Strategy continues to be funded in two ways:

Funding directly through Departmental Research and Information Strategies

Where research and statistical work has a particular Departmental or sectoral focus, it would be more appropriate for the relevant Department to consider funding. It may be possible for such focused work to be funded under the Strategy if the issue has a high equality and social need priority and in the event of limited options for other supportive funding.

More immediately appropriate for funding under the Strategy is the case where identified research or statistical work is of relevance to more than one Government Department.

Funding through the Equality and Social Need Research and Information research budget

The inter-Departmental research budget in support of the Strategy is comprised of equal contributions from all Northern Ireland Government Departments, and the Northern Ireland Office. The inter-Departmental research budget will be managed by OFMdfM Research Branch on behalf of ESNRIG and ESNISG. Decisions on approving funding will be made by the Equality and Social Need Steering Group or, in appropriate circumstances, by OFMdfM research branch. In instances where funding is to be approved by OFMdfM Research Branch, prior notification of this decision should be given to members of ESNRIG in sufficient time to allow for responses from interested Departments.

5.2. Implementation

Implementation of the Strategy is, of course, much broader than the identification and funding of research or statistical projects.

ESNRIG represents a collaborative forum that enables inter-Departmental and inter-Sectoral sharing of ideas, expertise and resources.

5.3. Actions to be taken

In recognition of the unique opportunities presented by this group, and in response to issues raised in the evaluation of the Strategy, the ESNRIG will in 2009 – 2011:

1. Formally endorse a research strategy and priorities document outlining the key strategic priorities for 2009 – 2011. These priorities have been

accepted by policy officials. The principles and priorities will be reviewed every three years. In addition an annual research programme will detail the specific research or statistical work to be completed for that period.

2. Ensure a minimum of 2 formal meetings annually;
3. Annually review Strategy outputs against identified policy need and formally present to ESNSG.
4. Consider, and develop as appropriate, linkages to other stakeholders to ensure Strategy outputs are disseminated as broadly as possible; and
5. Ensure that the Strategy is mainstreamed appropriately into Departmental research and information strategies.

5.4. Commissioning Research

The majority of the inter-Departmental research budgets between 2003 and 2006 were directed at meeting internally identified equality and social need policy research and information needs, including the supportive funding of a number of flagship household surveys.

External research is generally commissioned through Governments' Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) with research Terms of Reference developed by ESNRIG.

Given that it is not possible to be fully prescriptive about research needs and in recognition of the ability of the broader research and academic communities to identify unmet need, the Strategy will continue to welcome unsolicited research proposals. These proposals must however fall within the aims, principles and priorities outlined in this Strategy.

Acknowledging that resources are limited, proposals which seek part-funding, as part of a larger consortium of funders, are also welcomed.

5.5. Criteria for Research Funding of Unsolicited Proposals

Decisions on funding of research are made by the Equality and Social Need Steering Group on recommendations made by sub-groups of the Equality and Social Need Research and Information Group. Research funding of unsolicited proposals is likely to be assessed against the following criteria:

- Policy relevance
- Consistency with the aims, principles and priorities detailed in the Strategy
- Methodology
- Track record and experience of researchers
- Timeliness
- Cost and value for money

5.6. Submitting an Application

Prior to submitting an application, contact should be made with OFMdfM Research Branch staff⁴ to discuss. It is the case that annual research budgets can be fully allocated well in advance of the beginning of the financial year therefore proposals should be made as early as possible.

An application can be submitted for consideration at any time and the application for research funding must be submitted as part of the proposal. A copy of the research application form can be found at: www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality/equalityresearch/equality-social-need-programme.htm.

Proposers will receive an acknowledgement that their application has been received. Normally an application will be considered by the ESNRIG or one of its sub-groups and a recommendation made to the ESNSG. Proposers will be informed of the outcome of the application for funding as soon as possible following the ESNSG meeting.

5.7. Steering Arrangements

Members of the research and information group will convene, or be represented on, a steering group as appropriate for all funded projects.

⁴ For contact details see: www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/equalityresearch

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE STRATEGY

The evaluation of the operation of the 2003 – 2006 Strategy indicated that the underpinning aims, principles and priorities were sound. In effect, the Strategy was deemed 'fit for purpose'. The evaluation raised strategic, operational and communication issues which will be addressed in the future through the actions identified above.

It is proposed therefore to monitor the Strategy on a triennial basis and to formally request ESNSG to provide feedback on the extent to which the operation of the Strategy and the role provided by ESNRIG met identified policy research and information needs. A review of the operation of the Strategy will be completed by 2011 and forwarded to ESNSG for comment in preparation for the next planning cycle (2012 – 2014).

Important questions that will be posed for 2011 will be:

- Has the Equality and Social Need Research and Information Strategy been mainstreamed within Departmental research and information strategies?
- Has awareness of the Strategy been broadened?
- Have Strategy outputs been presented in an accessible and meaningful manner?
- Has the Strategy met the equality and social need policy research and information needs identified by ESNSG over the period?
- Has the Strategy succeeded in building upon the filling of gaps and establishing of baselines in terms specifically of:
 - improving implementation;
 - identifying best practice; and
 - assessing policy impact

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT BETWEEN

**THE EQUALITY AND SOCIAL NEED
STEERING GROUP**

AND

**THE EQUALITY AND SOCIAL NEED
RESEARCH AND INFORMATION GROUP**

1. The parties

This Service Level Agreement (SLA) is made between the Chair of the Equality and Social Need Steering Group and the Chair of the Equality and Social Need Research and Information Group in respect of the implementation of the cross-Departmental equality and social need research and information strategy.

2. Introduction

The Equality and Social Need Steering Group (ESNSG) is a cross-Departmental group comprising senior officials and chaired by the Head of the Equality Directorate within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMdFM). The ESNSG is tasked with taking forward the broad Equality and Social Need agendas within Government and to maximise the impact of joined-up Government action in the various areas covered by Equality and Social Need.

The ESNSG is supported by a cross-Departmental research budget to which each Department makes an annual and equivalent contribution.

The Equality and Social Need Research and Information Group (ESNRIG) is a sub-group to the ESNSG and comprises members of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), including NISRA representatives out-posted in the various Government Departments. In addition, representatives from the Equality Commission, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission are members of the ESNRIG. The function of ESNRIG is to provide research and statistical support to the work of the ESNSG in line with the cross-Departmental equality and social need research and information strategy. The Chair of ESNRIG is the Senior Principal Statistician of the OFMdFM Equality Directorate Research Branch.

The Chair of ESNRIG is a member of the ESNSG and represents the conduit between the two groups.

3. This Agreement

This SLA describes the relationship between ESNRIG and ESNSG, the responsibilities of each in respect of this agreement, and sets the parameters for the provision of research and statistical support by ESNRIG to ESNSG. In particular the agreement details:

- The responsibilities of both parties and procedures for implementing and monitoring the agreement;
- The liaison mechanisms between ESNRIG and ESNSG;
- The strategic research and information priorities for 2009 – 2011; and

- Expenditure against the annual research budget

Changes to the SLA must be authorized jointly by signatories or their successor on behalf of their respective groups.

4. Responsibilities, Implementation and Monitoring

The ESNSG will:

- Endorse the cross-Departmental equality and social need research and information strategy;
- Set the broad strategic policy priorities for the period 2009 – 2011 in line with policy need and the equality and social need research and information strategy;
- Agree, on foot of recommendation by ESNRIG, the annual expenditure of the equality and social need research budget;
- Advise ESNRIG of emerging policy priority changes impacting on research and statistical requirements;
- Provide annual feedback to ESNRIG on the extent to which research and statistics under the equality and social need research and information strategy has delivered against identified policy need.

The ESNRIG will:

- Provide advice and recommendations to ESNSG in respect of the commissioning of research work through the cross-Departmental research budget;
- Consider unsolicited research proposals received and make funding recommendations to ESNSG;
- Agree with ESNSG the annual expenditure of the research budget in line with the equality and social need research and information strategy and policy need;
- Manage and administer the research budget ensuring that procurement and audit best practice is followed in respect of expenditure of the research budget;
- Ensure that the views and expertise of the community and voluntary sector and the Equality and Human Rights Commissions are considered in relation to the development of research projects and advice on funding;

- Ensure inter-Departmental coordination of ESNSG research and statistical projects;
- Alert ESNSG to appropriate statistical and research developments in respect of equality and social need;
- Undertake, as appropriate, activities associated with the publication of research and its dissemination via websites, seminars and conferences;
- Provide regular updates and an annual statement to ESNSG of research budget income and expenditure and seek an annual assessment by ESNSG of the extent to which research and statistics under the equality and social need research and information strategy has delivered against identified policy need.

In taking forward these responsibilities, ESNRIG will be supported by a secretariat comprised of members of the research branch of OFMdFM.

5. Liaison Mechanisms and Secretariat Functions

Under direct rule the predecessor to ESNSG, the Social Steering Group (SSG), was serviced by a statistics branch resourced by the Department of Finance and Personnel on a common good basis. Currently, OFMdFM funds a research branch to support its various policy and legislative responsibilities comprising 1 Senior Principal Statistician, 2 Principal Statisticians, 2 Deputy Principal Statisticians, and 2 Assistant Statisticians.

OFMdFM research branch provides the secretariat to ESNRIG and membership to ESNSG through the Chair of ESNRIG. However, the primary function of the branch is to provide research and statistical support to the Equality Directorate of OFMdFM comprising Equality, Rights and Social Need Division and Good Relations and Reconciliation Division.

Under the current funding arrangements, the OFMdFM Equality Directorate research branch will continue to service ESNRIG under the equality and social need research and information strategy.

OFMdFM Equality Directorate Research Branch staff will seek to develop and maintain good working relationships with the Chair and Members of ESNSG, appropriate colleagues in Departments and appropriate members of relevant agencies in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

These arrangements will be reviewed annually to ensure that they are sufficient in meeting the needs of both ESNRIG and ESNSG.

6. Disputes

Disputes arising in the delivery of the above will be settled by negotiation between the Chair of ESNRIG and the Chair of ESNSG following appropriate discussion with the respective groups.

7. Gaps in research and strategic activities 2009 – 2011

The strategic priorities of the strategy will be guided by the principles outlined earlier in this document. Potential themes for ESNSG research and issues in relation to research approach and orientation are discussed below. The focus here is on the identification of gaps in knowledge and methods for reducing these. These gaps have been identified by a range of stakeholders both within and outside government and while not intended to be prescriptive or fully comprehensive nevertheless provides a framework of potential research themes and strategic activities that promote the aims of the overall strategy.

These research themes draw on a paper prepared by Professor Mary Daly, Queen's University Belfast, for the Royal Irish Academy Committee of the Social Sciences (on which OFMdFM is represented), and is intended to focus on gaps in research knowledge. Such gaps arise in a number of ways:

- Through shortage of research funding (both in a general sense and also in terms of theme-specific funding);
- Inevitably, some topics and fields are emergent and so have not been the subject of research endeavour; and
- Insufficient research has been carried out on some topics or it is apparent that there has been insufficient communication of the results of research that has been funded.

There are many points that could be made in relation to the setting of research priorities. One key point is a concern about the **infrastructure and framework** for research. A key resource issue is the availability of data sets, in terms both of generating new data but also making available, on a community-wide basis, data that has already been gathered.

The importance of developing the statistical infrastructure for long-range studies of population, economy and society should also be noted. There is a general concern about under-usage of secondary data sources.

A further issue is the **utilisation of the results of research**. There is seen to be a general under-utilisation of research results, with too little emphasis placed on, or funding made available for the purpose of, circulating and communicating the results of research.

In terms of substantive topics for research priority, the following are the main perceived gaps.

MIGRATION

Migration is a topic that is too little studied in Northern Ireland. In the first instance there needs to be research on the **constituent elements and nature of migration** - inflows and outflows, duration of stay, migrants' social and geographic mobility.

A second general type of research that is needed is on the **implications of migration** for social relations. Old and new minorities should be included.

INEQUALITIES

Knowledge gaps in this area can be divided into two broad categories: **the nature of inequalities**, especially in the context of economic growth and social change, and the **effects of public policy** on inequalities.

In relation to the nature of inequalities, more emphasis is needed on the study of **diverse sources or types of inequalities** and how a range of factors including socio-economic status, ethnic background, gender and others serve to structure relations and opportunities in society and how different axis of inequality are related to each other.

There is a need for further work on social inequalities in the context of poverty, social exclusion and deprivation at community level, as well as on the impact of globalization and migration on communities and relationships. The spatial dimension to deprivation and the relationships between service provision and processes of deprivation and exclusion are further research priority areas.

PUBLIC POLICY

In relation to public policy, there has been a strong 'equality thrust' in legislation in recent years but little is known about the efficacy or consequences of the approach followed.

Hence a need is identified for **better policy evaluation research** in the area of equality and equality of opportunity. This has theoretical and methodological implications as well as implications for the development of legislation and public policy in the areas of equality, social inclusion/poverty and human rights.

There needs to be **greater analysis of economic and social policies** more generally in terms of the consequences of current growth policies and strategies for inequalities. Study of the operation of the tax and welfare systems is vital in this regard (e.g., equity; efficiency, unwanted effects, nature and consequences of the indirect and corporate tax systems).

HEALTH AND ILLNESS

Social and cultural issues relating to health and mental health are under-researched. As with other service areas, we still lack vital information about the social and economic aspects of health and healthcare (e.g., quality, costs, efficiency, equity, health insurance system and its consequences).

In relation to health and wellbeing more generally, a range of specific topics have been identified:

- **constructions of recovery and growth**: an examination of how the health services interact with voluntary support groups;
- comparison of **how support groups co-operate** with each other to provide the most appropriate service to their clients.
- the relationship between **psychosocial processes and mental health difficulties** (including suicide);
- **geographies of health and healthiness** (the spatial distribution of health and illness) and the nature of inequalities in social and spatial access to health services.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Existing research with children and young people is primarily oriented to the needs of policy making. While the new longitudinal study on children in the Republic and the Millennium Cohort Study in Northern Ireland represent a major positive development, they will not obviate the need to make research on children and young people a priority.

Other issues that are identified as requiring further research are:

- child poverty;
- the equity and efficiency of the educational system at all levels;
- the understanding of the educational system as a totality and the benefits – personal, societal, economic, social.

FAMILIES AND FAMILY LIFE

Among other effects, the rapid economic growth of the last decade or so has acted to transform the nature of family life. In particular the greater entry of women into the labour market has profoundly affected not only the lives of the women involved but the way family life is organised.

Research is needed to investigate **patterns of family life** and the attitudes and opinions of all family members towards their 'quality' of life. In addition, other aspects of the changing nature of family life needs to be investigated, especially shifts arising from the decline in multi-

generation households, the growth of lone-parent families and the growth of commuter-related patterns of family living.

The matter of **reconciliation of work and family life** also needs to be investigated, as an issue for public policy and employers but also as a matter of quality of life.

BORDER-RELATED RESEARCH

While research on this topic is growing, more work is required regarding **cross border attitudes and opinions**. Another topic that is seen to need research is the nature and consequences of **migration from Northern Ireland** to other parts of the UK. There is some recent work on relationships within border areas, but how people feel farther from the border, or how the border remains an emotional barrier when viewed from both sides could be further explored.

CRIME, THE CRIMINAL SYSTEM AND SOCIAL COHESION

Crime, or fear of crime, appears today a much more prominent feature of society than in the past. The **changing nature of criminal behaviour** needs to be studied as does the **changing nature of crime control** (e.g., the operation of formal and informal 'policing' and social control mechanisms more broadly). The impact of the fear of crime on society, particularly the fear of crime of vulnerable groups within society requires further research.

DEVELOPMENT, URBANISATION, THE ENVIRONMENT

Present day **studies of settlements** in Britain (highly urbanised), Ireland (still quite rural) and Northern Ireland are needed. These would serve to illustrate the extent to which assumptions concerning the operation of Britain and Ireland settlements can better inform policy.

Current practices and policies in relation to **urban and rural economic restructuring** also need further research. The following are some suggested lines of enquiry: housing, employment and residential patterns; land use and transport; sustainability; urban regeneration; social inclusion/exclusion and areas of multiple deprivation in urban areas (including small and medium-sized towns); social and spatial integration/segregation.

RESEARCH APPROACH AND ORIENTATION

There is a need to balance the resourcing of applied research and research that is oriented towards theoretical and conceptual development. From an ESNSG perspective the priority will be to fund applied rather than theoretical projects but to support the latter where it may benefit future applied work e.g. in terms of improved methodology.

Secondly, research should contribute to building up accessible and enduring databases (cross-sectional and longitudinal, based on

administrative records as well as surveys) and cumulative knowledge about society, embodied in both rigorous description and formal models.

Thirdly, methodological diversity should be encouraged.

Fourthly, there is a need to integrate international dimensions to the research agenda. In other words, a comparative orientation should be supported and encouraged.

Fifthly, genuine interdisciplinarity is vital. This is to be realised by researchers working on common databases with a commitment to learning from disciplines other than their own.

8. Agreed Equality and Social Need research budget expenditure for (2008/09)

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|--|-----------------|
| Total Budget allocated (2008/09) | £300,000 |
| Expenditure and Food Survey | £100,000 |
| Continuous Household Survey | £20,000 |
| Northern Ireland Household Panel Survey | £50,000 |
| Labour Force Survey | £40,000 |
| Northern Ireland Longitudinal Survey Support Unit | £30,000 |
| Updating the NI Multiple Measures Of Deprivation | £30,000 |
| DCAL Sport project | £20,000 |
| Impacts of differential inflation rates On household poverty | £12,850 |

9. Review of the Agreement

This agreement will be reviewed annually by the respective Chairs of ESNSG and ESNRIG.

Signed on behalf of ESNSG

Date

Chair ESNSG

Signed on behalf of ESNRIG

Date

Chair ESNRIG