

**INDICATORS OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN
NORTHERN IRELAND**

REPORT OF CONSULTATION

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Foreword

This is the second in a series of reports from a research project commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to study the development of indicators of diversity and equality in Northern Ireland. The aims of the project were:

- To conduct a literature review on indicators of equality and diversity with a particular focus on their relevance and applicability in Northern Ireland. This included considering the relevant legislative context and identifying best practice nationally and internationally on equality and diversity monitoring.
- To consult and reflect the opinions of key “stakeholders” representative of groups within the nine categories identified under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).
- Through reviewing and extensively analysing existing NI statistics and research, to develop an “equality and diversity picture” of the region; to identify key indicators of change over time; and to consider the potential of existing data to provide useful indicators of equality and diversity
- To consider the relative strengths and weaknesses of approaches that use univariate and multivariate methods to develop measures of equality and diversity; to comment on the technical and socio-economic interpretations of the indicators suggested in the consultation; to identify gaps; and to make recommendations about the way forward in terms of indicator development and future monitoring.

The project reports are as follows:

1. General Literature Review
2. Consultation Exercise
3. Patterns of Social Difference
4. Measuring Change
5. Executive Summary.

This research project lies within the context of the Northern Ireland Government Departments’ Equality and Social Need Research and Information Strategy¹. That strategy committed, amongst other things, to assist the understanding of the extent, nature and causes of inequality and social exclusion in Northern Ireland. The current project whilst reflecting this commitment also reflects the continuous developments in relation to statutory responsibilities placed on public authorities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).

The report reflects the views of the authors and not necessarily those of Departments.

¹ See: www.research.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/crossdept.pdf

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INTRODUCTION

Background and Methodology

The purpose of the consultation phase of the research was to establish in a systematic way the main areas of concern to interest groups in each of the Section 75 categories about inequality in opportunity (the areas of greatest disadvantage). In particular, we were keen to explore what information might be thought to be useful (a) in highlighting such concerns to policy makers and (b) in demonstrating the extent to which inequalities were or were not diminishing. A structured approach was used in which interviewees were asked for their views on key aspects of inequality in the following policy areas:

- Labour Market
- Education
- Crime and Justice
- Health and Health and Social Care
- Social Security
- Family and Household Structure
- Culture/Social Capital
- Income/Wealth
- Housing
- Transport
- Other measures of quality of environment.

As this was, of necessity, a limited consultation we were keen to ensure that those to whom we spoke were, as far as possible, from the larger “umbrella” organisations who were representative of a broad spectrum of groups within each S75 category. We acquired a list of such bodies from the Equality Coalition from which we selected potential consultees which we further refined in discussion with the Equality Commission. A list of those consulted is given in Appendix A.

We encouraged people to think about measurable reductions in inequality that could, within reason, be achieved through changes in:

- Policy
- Legislation
- Resources (although remembering this would deprive other activities of funds).

Although we encouraged those to whom we spoke to think about measures of inequality in opportunity rather than outcome or process, we received a large number of suggestions about outcome and indeed process monitoring (including the level of resources devoted to certain activities).

The fact that all such suggestions have been included in this record of the consultation exercise should not be taken as representing any endorsement of their potential value in arriving at a set of equality and diversity indicators.

Structure of report

This report documents the concerns in the S75 categories in turn, as they relate to each of the general policy areas outlined above.

GENERAL POINTS

Persons of different religious belief/different religious opinion

We interviewed spokespersons for the four main political parties in Northern Ireland along with representatives of the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches. Perhaps understandably it proved difficult to distinguish concerns that were seen to be a product of a community's political opinion from those that arose because of religious belief. For that reason we conflated the responses in these two categories.

Men and women

It was probably inevitable that in discussion of gender related issues there was a greater emphasis on areas relating to women's disadvantage by comparison with men. We were nonetheless able to establish some issues in which the converse was perceived to be the case, particularly in relation to employment and health issues. Many of the issues raised in the context of women and employment were largely a consequence of the traditional position of women as primary carers and therefore feature in the section relating to persons with dependents.

Persons of different marital status/Persons with dependents

We used a broad definition of dependents to ensure that it embraced people with children and also "carers." For the purposes of the consultation we used the Diversity Matters definition of a "carer" as someone who "Looks after family, partners or friends in need of help because they are ill, frail or have a disability. The care they provide is unpaid. This does not include caring for children or young people unless the children are also ill, frail etc. Nor does it include paid care workers, personal assistants or people engaged in formal volunteering schemes."

Persons of different racial groups

We were conscious that the issues of concern for people from different racial groups could differ according to whether they lived in a rural or an urban environment. We therefore extended our consultation to include, along with NICEM, STEP (the South Tyrone Empowerment Project). NICEM have been pressing for coordination of research on ethnicity issues and in particular the need for concerted efforts to establish practical collaborations across the region, both across Departments and between

voluntary and statutory agencies. While data is available in relation to the Chinese and Asian Communities there is little relating to smaller ethnic groups, particularly those emerging from the former Eastern Bloc countries. There was also a general concern that sample sizes were too small and that there were “hidden groups”, for example members of a particular country’s minority ethnic population, not identified in the Census. Many of the issues raised by STEP related to the problems faced by migrant workers who had settled in a rural community.

Persons of different sexual orientation

In common with the research conducted by Esther Breitenbach, a key issue that arose in this part of the consultation was the lack of quantitative data on the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender population. Confidentiality issues, and the need to ensure that people’s human rights are not infringed, represent one significant obstacle to acquiring such data. We were also struck by the comparative lack of funding in this area, especially given the estimate (albeit disputed) that one in ten of the population is lesbian or gay. The main focus of such resources as are available was said to be on health (HIV and AIDS) rather than social issues or policy development. The lack of resources has major implications in relation to effective consultation on, for example, Equality Impact Assessments and engagement in relation to policy initiatives.

Against the backcloth of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission report, “Enhancing the Rights of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People”, there was some concern and a degree of scepticism about Government’s commitment to address such issues. We were told that although the report, which outlined the extent to which laws, policies and practice discriminate against lesbian, gay and bisexual, was published in August 2001, it appeared to have stimulated little if any action by Government Departments.

The suggestion was also made to us that if a policy was found to be discriminatory on the grounds of race, disability or religion, then it was safe to assume that it would adversely impact on the gay / lesbian community as well. Although this is a questionable assumption, perhaps consideration should be given to using proxy indicators in instances where little or no data are available on sexual orientation *per se*. rather than growing this capacity in house.

Persons with a disability

As with some of the other categories, a key concern raised in the consultation was a perceived lack of information on the experience of disabled people in employment, as well as data on how people with a disability interacted with society generally. In this regard, it was suggested that data collection on disability needed to focus not only on the experiences and attitudes of the general population towards the issue of disability, but more importantly, data needed to be collected on the attitudes and experiences of disabled people themselves. Given that many disabled people had a high dependence on benefits, it was felt that there needed to be more in-depth analysis of the transition from benefits to employment, and a movement away from a culture which was represented as acting to constrain the employment, social and political aspirations of disabled people.

Persons of different ages

The consultation focused primarily on inequalities and disadvantage suffered by older people (people of 50 and older). Once again the main area of concern related to employment with the perception that one of the legacies of the 1990's was an increase in the number of people in their fifties who were no longer in employment. Some employers' attitudes towards employing older people were characterised by the advertisement that appeared in the Times from a budget airline seeking a dynamic "young" chief executive. Although recent media coverage suggested that older people were increasingly vulnerable to crime, statistics proved otherwise. However, one side effect of the media coverage was an increase in fear of crime among older people which, in an insidious way, was deemed to be almost as damaging as crime itself.

CHAPTER 1 LABOUR MARKET ISSUES

The highest proportion of concerns conveyed to us related to the labour market and employment. This is perhaps unsurprising given the impact that employment inevitably has on income and wealth and, consequentially, other key “life” issues. In addition, many of those consulted regarded Fair Employment legislation as a beacon of success in reducing inequalities and proof of what was achievable. Some respondents felt that Fair Employment principles and monitoring practices should be extended to cover all of the Section 75 categories.

Persons of different religious belief and different political affiliation

It was stressed that for employment to be fully accessible to all communities it should be located in neutral areas – areas in which people, whatever their religion or political affiliation, do not feel threatened. On the other hand it was strongly argued that Government should provide incentives for the location of businesses in disadvantaged areas in order to reduce unemployment in those areas. In that context it was suggested that Invest NI should restrict TSN support to employers located within (not as currently, within or adjacent to) disadvantaged areas. As well as personal safety, “chill factors” cited included the perceived attitudes of a particular workforce and/or management and the lack of a neutral working environment, sometimes evidenced by the display of flags and emblems. The latter was said to be a feature of some District Council Offices.

Although there had been a general reduction in unemployment and the disparity between the two communities in terms of male unemployment had been reduced, there was still a major gap particularly in respect of the long-term unemployed. It was put to us that Catholics were over-represented in low income employment and Catholic females particularly so. Catholics were also less likely to achieve senior managerial positions. People in Nationalist areas were thought still to be disadvantaged by low expectations. Republicans perceived themselves to be disadvantaged by the continuing practice of security vetting within the Civil Service and by the national security exemption in FE legislation.

On the other side concerns were expressed about an unwillingness to acknowledge the progress that had been made in the fair employment field and the emergence of an apparent disparity between the two communities in current levels of general

recruitment. There were particular concerns about Protestants being disadvantaged in recruitment to the PSNI and an apparent religious imbalance in some parts of the public sector (and, potentially, if Equality Commission recommendations on removing the exemption in fair employment legislation for teaching posts in controlled schools were implemented).

The perception in both communities of disadvantage in the employment field needs to be objectively assessed and the reasons (which may include educational factors) for any current imbalances in employment/unemployment and recruitment established. The suggestion was made that data should be gathered and analysed on the nature and origin of complaints made to Fair Employment tribunals, and also the proportion by community background employed by individual companies. (One potential obstacle for this kind of analytical exercise is that increasing numbers of people don't want to be "classified" as one side or the other.)

In summary, our discussions suggested the following possible topics for monitoring:

- Numbers of employers adopting practices to ensure neutral working environment
- Net increase/decrease in numbers of jobs in each disadvantaged area over a given period
- Changes in criteria for INI support for companies to favour investment within rather than merely adjacent to disadvantaged areas
- Nature and origin of complaints made to employment tribunals
- Proportion of Protestants and Catholics employed by individual companies
- Analysis of any imbalances in current recruitment
- Removal of vetting arrangements for posts in the Civil Service, Judiciary and Probation Service
- Numbers of Catholics and Protestants in low income employment.

Men and Women

Although men are clearly "over-represented" in certain occupations, they were seen to be "under-represented" in the caring professions, for example nursing and child care. In the latter case this appeared to be partially attributable to a perception of men as potential abusers as well as to what is sometimes characterised as "traditional stereotyping", which is also said to result in fewer men working in secretarial positions (except at the highest levels).

If one accepts the thesis that the bulk of social inequality between men and women is indeed attributable to stereotyping rather than to the exercise of choice, there would appear to be an arguable case for devoting resources to overcoming such stereotypes by, for example, ensuring as far as possible that employers provide equal incentives to male and female employees to perform the role of primary carer or to facilitate shared caring arrangements for children. It was argued that paid paternity leave did not create this effect and, because of the level at which it is paid, was generally only accessible to those in higher income brackets.

Equal pay between men and women remained a key issue here, along with other conditions of employment such as rates of pay, overtime rates, working hours and child care provision (see also section on persons with dependents).

There was a perception that women who wish to start businesses and become self-employed lacked the networking and mutual support infrastructure available to men, as well as access to financial support. It was suggested that Invest Northern Ireland statistics would highlight the disparity in support provided to men and women driven enterprises.

The “glass ceiling” syndrome remained an issue for women and the extent to which they secure positions of authority in organisations needs to be monitored and consideration given to removing obstacles to them doing so (such as over-emphasis on the work ethic which is perceived by some to be “hostile” to those women who are also carers).

In summary, our discussions suggested the following possible topics for monitoring:

- Income levels for men and women
- The numbers of men employed in occupations in which they are currently under-represented
- The numbers of women employed in occupations in which they are currently under represented
- Numbers of men and women at all tiers of employment (from ground level to top management)
- Numbers of self employed women
- Level of grants provided to women starting up businesses.

Marital status / Dependents

As outlined previously, our consultation in relation to persons with dependents embraced those who were carers and also those whose dependents were children and young people.

The key issue for people with dependents and employment related to the need for flexible employment practices which were applicable regardless of which parent took responsibility for caring for children. The cost and availability of child care were also crucial factors in determining whether a parent could return to work.

The above problems were much more acute for parents with disabled children, where access to affordable and appropriate child care represented a major barrier to employment. Although recent changes in legislation had given some limited rights (only the right to *ask* to work flexibly and time off to deal with emergencies), getting time off work for essential activities such as health appointments continued to create difficulties for parents.

People who are carers within the Diversity Matters definition had particular needs for flexible working arrangements but had no legislative support for securing these. In addition, up until recently, enterprise training grants were only payable for full time participation, but increasingly this was extending to part time.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following possible topics for monitoring:

- Number of employers in all sectors (public, private and voluntary) providing flexible working arrangements
- Opportunities for flexible working within SMEs by either parent
- Qualitative information on difficulties faced by people with dependents/carers in returning to employment
- Level of tax credit available to caring/dependant responsibilities
- Costs of child care by region
- Introduction of legislation to ensure support to carers
- Percentage of carers accessing enterprise training grants
- Percentage of fathers taking paternity leave and duration of leave.

Persons of different racial groups

We found that employment concerns in this category varied considerably according to the racial group and their location. For example, in spite of high levels of academic

attainment, people of Chinese and Asian background were said to have difficulty obtaining employment in the field in which they were qualified, and at a level that was commensurate with their qualifications. There was a low incidence of ethnic minority students securing work placements, and this was regarded as an important step in subsequently obtaining employment.

We were also told of people who had secured professional qualifications in their native countries but were unable to obtain appropriate employment because these were not recognised in Northern Ireland. In many cases this meant that they had to accept menial employment. This was regarded as particularly perverse where the qualifications concerned related to skills which were in short supply, such as in some areas of the health service. There was a shortage of solicitors with the expertise required to support ethnic minority members who wished to pursue race discrimination cases in employment. There was also said to be a lack of awareness among ethnic minority members of their legal rights.

Economic migrants, on the other hand, often faced exploitation by unscrupulous employment agents who tied employment to housing and in so doing limited the mobility of the workers and the choices available to them. It was suggested that there should be a registration system or at the very least a code of practice for agents as an attempt to minimise exploitation. Economic migrants were often from former Eastern Bloc countries although there were also growing numbers of Portuguese. They were frequently located in or close to rural areas where there were ample unskilled and semi-skilled opportunities in the agri-food industry.

For most ethnic minority members, language could represent a significant barrier to employment or higher paid employment and access to English language courses was crucial.

Apart from these key issues it was put to us that there was a need to change attitudes among employers, by, for example, developing training and awareness for employers about the advantages of employing a diverse workforce.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following possible topics for monitoring:

- The rate of increase in the numbers of ethnic minority members who move above the bottom tier in employment or who earn above the minimum wage
- Progression through tiers of employment

- Availability of resources for language teaching for the non-English speaking population
- Introduction of a code of practice and a licensing system for agents
- Levels of academic achievement among ethnic minority members and progression to employment commensurate with that achievement
- Analysis of the numbers of complaints received by the Equality Commission from minority ethnic groups relating to employment
- Extension of fair employment type monitoring to race
- Greater acceptance of “foreign” qualifications for professional positions.

Persons of different sexual orientation

There was a significant emphasis on attitudinal surveys in the monitoring of any reduction of inequality in relation to sexual orientation. It was also emphasised that a major obstacle to securing reliable data about the employment of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people related to the need for confidentiality and the need to ensure that people’s human rights were protected. Information needed to be sought in a confidential way but if personal details were sought there was a potential infringement of human rights. This posed problems for monitoring key issues like earnings levels and the extent to which there were barriers to LGBT people securing employment at higher levels. It was suggested that the issue needed to be handled in a confidential but ‘normalised’ way, with a move away from seeing sexual orientation as a ‘sensitive issue’, which was seen as a reason for public sector and other organisations to avoid asking the question.

Other major concerns related to job security and safety in the workplace, with LGBT employees feeling uncomfortable with being open about their sexuality. Other concerns relate to unemployment and lack of adult training and education with regard to returning to the labour market. Very often young LGBT people had not had the full benefits of the education system, with many having had to leave school early due to bullying and victimisation. In the past, sexual orientation had not been taken into account as a source of long-term unemployment and job security and its attendant effects.

In response to these issues the following possible topics for monitoring were suggested:

- The extent to which job vacancies are advertised in the LGBT press and with LGBT organisations
- The availability of counselling in the workplace with clear channels to deal with homophobic harassment
- Qualitative information on the existence of work environments
- Availability of information on LGBT community organisations especially within the trade unions
- The extent to which job advertisements include a clear statement of commitment to equality of opportunity
- The extent to which attitudes amongst employers are changing
- The number of private sector employers with policies (for example in relation to bullying and harassment) that embrace sexual orientation.

Persons with a disability

Once again attitudes were seen as an important factor - of potential employers, disabled people themselves and family members. For example, disabled people might themselves wish to work but were perceived as economically inactive by other people and had no opportunity to try work. On the other hand, their own attitudes might be an inhibiting factor – the door to employment might be open but they might have apprehensions about entering. Family attitudes might also be an inhibiting factor. It was put to us that most disabled people remained at entry level in employment and there were not enough in “mainstream” training or employment.

In spite of recent legislation some workplaces remained inaccessible.

We were also told that there were no supported employment (as distinct from employment support) programmes in Northern Ireland².

In summary, in our discussions the following possible topics for monitoring were suggested:

- Attitude surveys (employers’, disabled people’s and family members’)

² Supported employment involves a job coach or specialist working closely with an individual, taking account of his interests and abilities and the type of environment in which he or she would choose to work. Employment Support programmes, on the other hand, (in which employers are paid a subsidy for employing disabled people) may prevent people from entering the mainstream, as in the NICS.

- The pay differential between disabled and able-bodied people (as with men/women)
- Information on the length of time disabled people stay in employment and about their experiences while in employment
- Information on workplace accessibility
- Changes in attitudes by Government Departments in relation to disabled people. (For example, ESF matching funding for training programmes is provided through DHSSPS rather than DEL.)

Persons of different ages

We were told that the 1990s had brought an increase in the number of people in their fifties who were no longer in employment, or what was often described as no longer economically active. However, this situation arose for a variety of reasons, for example the decline in traditional manufacturing industries which gave rise to large scale redundancies in some areas. But in many cases older people were leaving employment of their own volition, perhaps through early retirement packages or simply through the will to scale down from jobs associated with long hours and high stress factors to less demanding or part-time work. Statistics relating to the numbers of older people in employment and in different types of employment would not, therefore, tell the whole story and there would be a need for survey information relating to the question of choice in employment.

There was also a perception, born out by the reality of job advertisements which sought “young, dynamic executives”, that many employers held the view that older people could not measure up to the cut and thrust of employment in a senior position in a competitive industry.

That said, demographic forecasts which suggest that by 2023 there will be a 16% decline in the number of sixteen year olds, combined with EU targets requiring that by 2010, fifty per cent of those over fifty should be in employment would place new emphasis on the value of older people to employers.

In summary, the following were suggested as issues to be monitored:

- The number of older people in employment (full time, part time etc.)
- The numbers of older people in different types of employment (managerial, shop floor etc)

- Surveys relating to choices relating to employment (for example, whether people were working part-time or in non-managerial levels through choice or other factors)
- The numbers of older people employed in occupations normally associated with younger people (for example, airline cabin crew)
- The number of discrimination cases raised on grounds of age.

CHAPTER 2 EDUCATION ISSUES

Educational achievement at all levels was recognised by all of those to whom we spoke as a key factor in securing material advancement. It was therefore of particular significance to people generally in disadvantaged areas.

Persons of different religious belief and different political affiliation

The most challenging area within education related to secondary schooling for children from disadvantaged areas. There were major problems of motivation and retention with high levels of drop-out rate in the 15+ age group (particularly among boys). There was a shortage of role models: males who had succeeded in education and a corresponding need to encourage success. It was put to us that in parts of North Belfast only some 3% of nationalists had a third level qualification, and there were almost certainly similar pockets of educational deprivation in working class Protestant areas. The task of keeping males in secondary school was not helped by the fact that the transfer test often made people feel they were failures.

There was widespread agreement about the need for research into the differences between Protestant and Catholic working class children in educational attainment. Interestingly, spokespersons for each community thought that their community had lower levels of educational attainment than the other³. Although education may be “prized” more highly in Catholic households (at least partly for politico-historical reasons), the perceived lack of employment prospects was said to work as a disincentive for children to remain in education. On the other hand it was said that the Catholic community in particular saw education as an important means of social advancement.

Those representing the interests of ethnic minority groups pointed out that the school curriculum contained no provision for non-Christian religious education. The exclusion from RE of ethnic minority children was said to have a potentially long-term damaging effect.

It was suggested that the location of FE Colleges could represent a significant “chill factor” in the decision on whether to pursue Further Education (a college may be in a difficult area for one community, or physical access can be a problem for people from disadvantaged areas given the lack of suitable public transport). It was suggested that

³ It may be that unadjusted levels are higher in Protestant areas but that the difference is reversed once account is taken of socio-economic factors

there was a reluctance to locate FE Colleges in disadvantaged areas. On the other hand, the perception of Queen's University as an uncomfortable place for Protestants was seen to be easing, with the attraction of universities in GB representing a greater factor now in the exodus, in particular, of Protestant school leavers. There might be socio-economic factors including that Catholic families, with lower levels of affluence and possibly more children, were not as able to support children studying away from home. Many graduates from GB universities don't return and this fuels demographic concerns on the part of some in the Unionist community.

In summary in our discussions the following possible topics for monitoring were suggested:

- Provision for greater religious diversity in RE in schools
- Research into the differences between Protestant and Catholic working class children in educational attainment
- Religious breakdown of students in local universities.

Men and women generally

There was a major concern that general levels of educational achievement among males were steadily reducing. Boys were not achieving at the same levels as girls in education and the gap between the numbers of low and high male achievers was widening. Among the measures that might counter this trend were an increase in the numbers of male teachers and classroom assistants.

It was also suggested that there was a need to motivate men into adult education. Women tended to enter adult education with a view to personal development but men were more likely to be motivated by improving their employment prospects. On the other hand it was suggested that a "macho" culture had developed in some FE/HE courses (engineering was given as an example) which was on occasion proving a disincentive to women who wished to pursue such less "traditional" career paths.

There was said to be a lack of clarity about the extent to which distance learning was available to people in Northern Ireland as this was seen as a major facility for women.

In summary in our discussions the following possible topics for monitoring were suggested:

- Levels of educational achievement in males and females
- The numbers of men employed as teachers and classroom assistants

- Numbers of males entering adult education
- Numbers of women/men entering non traditional courses
- The percentage of young men in contact with the mainstream youth sector including data on the nature and level of provision within mainstream providers.

Marital status / Persons with dependents

As with employment, flexibility in the provision of FE and HE courses was seen as a key issue for people with dependents (including carers). Adult education was seen as a vital stepping stone back into employment for those who had interrupted their careers to look after dependents. Distance learning was one means of providing maximum flexibility, and therefore of ensuring accessibility to people with dependents, but it was said that there was a lack of clarity about the extent to which Northern Ireland was provided for by accredited distance learning courses.

The 21 hour rule in Carers' Allowance and associated restrictions on hours of attendance on FE/HE courses represented a problem for carers, although it was recognised that social security legislation was outside the scope even of a devolved administration.

It was also pointed out that woman carers returning to education often had problems arising from low confidence and social isolation. Deficiencies in public transport in rural areas were a recurring theme in relation to accessing education (including after schools provision), adult education, health and other services.

In summary, in our discussions the following possible topics for monitoring were suggested:

- The numbers of people with dependents returning to education (by age)
- The numbers of carers returning to education (by age)
- Child care provision e.g. ratios of children to professionals / inspection of premises
- Numbers of older dependents (18 – 19) in the education system – impact on young person as well as on carer / parents
- Availability of distance learning courses.

Persons of different racial groups

Respondents argued for changes to the curriculum to address the needs of the growing numbers of children from different ethnic backgrounds and to enhance understanding among children of those groups and their cultures.

We have already referred to the arguments put to us about the perceived need for greater diversity in RE beyond that currently provided by or on behalf of the four main Christian churches. It was also argued that there was a need for a wider curriculum to promote better understanding of diversity with the emphasis on key stages 1-3. We were told that there was no anti-racism training for teachers and there was a cultural bias in the teaching of history and literature.

Language was also a priority area in education. There was inconsistency across the Education and Library Boards in the extent to which English was taught as a second language and it was put to us that there should be blanket provision, including classroom support, across Northern Ireland.

There were general concerns about the levels of educational achievement among different racial groups with particular concern about Traveller children. We were told that a recent survey had shown the average school-leaving age amongst Travellers in Donegal to be thirteen and it was argued that the average for those in Northern Ireland would be similar.

It was suggested that there needed to be more pastoral care for different racial groups in mainstream youth provision which was regarded as a key facet of education.

As in other categories, Further Education was seen as an important stepping stone to better paid employment but there were doubts about the extent to which courses, beyond language courses, were being pursued by ethnic minority members.

In summary the following possible topics for monitoring were suggested:

- Extent to which ethnic minority members are represented in top schools
- Performance/achievement levels among different racial groups at 11 plus, GCSE and A level, together with progression and achievement rates in FE/HE
- Curriculum developments to promote better understanding of diversity
- Curriculum developments to address the specific needs of racial groups for whom English is a second language

- Classroom support for children of different racial groups for whom English is a second language
- Availability/uptake of anti-racism/ diversity training among teachers
- Average school-leaving age of children from different racial groups including Traveller children
- Racist incidents in schools possible topics for monitoring and published (in accordance with the recommendations in the Stephen Lawrence report.
- Number of young people from different racial groups who attend mainstream youth groups
- Courses being pursued by people from different racial groups in further education beyond English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (For example, child care and computing courses).

Persons of different sexual orientation

There was said to be a relatively high level of suicide amongst LGBT children with a major cause being the isolation and alienation they were perceived as experiencing. The causes of this were said to include: the difficulty in coming to terms with one's sexuality; the invisibility of the LGBT Community; the use of negative language about LGBT people, and a lack of positive role models. A wide range of issues were raised relating to LGBT young people and monitoring might include the following:

- The availability of peer support for children under the age of 16
- Policies in schools and youth groups to counter homophobic bullying
- The availability of support and qualitative information on job security for LGBT educators
- The provision of awareness training for all those working with children and young people, both in terms of education and social welfare
- The provision of positive sex education, including safer sex education, and education and understanding of LGBT relationships
- Policies that ensure confidentiality for LGBT youth and educators
- Curriculum provision that ensures recognition of diversity in education
- Availability of positive LGBT role models for pupils and teachers

- Sources of advice and support for teachers with regard to dealing with the needs of LGBT children and young people and the particular situations that arise with regard to those needs, for example coming out
- Removal of exemptions for private and religious schools
- Creation of an atmosphere where children and young people are free to express their opinions
- Availability of information on LGBT youth organisations in schools, libraries and other places
- Provision of education for older people about the experience of LGBT people.

Persons with a disability

Education was an area of particular concern to parents of disabled children. There was a continuing debate about whether children with special educational needs should be taught in mainstream classrooms or in special facilities. It was suggested that, notwithstanding recent legislation on the rights of individuals, most parents' experience pointed to a failure to identify or assess SEN quickly, poor information sharing and inadequate funding (particularly in the areas of additional one to one support in the classroom and speech and language therapy). Generally there was felt to be a need for more understanding of the restrictions on choice when it comes to a child's education.

In summary, our discussions produced the following possible topics for monitoring:

- Availability of resources for classroom support for disabled children and children with Special Educational Needs
- Resources available for Special Schools
- Time taken to assess SEN
- The number of children with learning disabilities who transfer out of mainstream schools into special provision
- Information on curriculum provision designed to ensure that disabled children leaving mainstream education are “job ready” and have the required life skills
- Qualitative information on the extent to which the DEL funding formula, which was said to penalise FE institutes for people not completing a course successfully, is a disincentive for them to take on disabled students
- Representation of disabled people in higher education

- Qualitative information on attitudes of teachers, staff in teacher training institutes, BoGs etc.

Persons of different ages

There were concerns about basic literacy levels among older people and a suggestion that these needed to be monitored to ensure that provision of adult literacy classes met need. Further education was seen as particularly important for older people who wanted to re-skill in order to secure a job, although non-vocational training was also regarded as an important first step back into education for older people. Higher education was also important in this context and we were given a surprising recent statistic that some 1100 people of fifty and over were attending accredited courses at QUB.

One particular area in which older people were seen as being treated unfairly related to the policy which denied people over the age of 54 access to student loans. It was put to us that this arose through erroneous assumptions about the potential working life of older people.

In summary, our discussions produced the following as topics for monitoring;

- Basic literacy and numeracy levels among older people
- The numbers of older people attending/graduating from accredited courses at NI universities
- Changes in the policies relating to student loans

CHAPTER 3 HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

General

There were universal concerns about quality in health care provision and the ability and willingness of the services to address the specialist needs of people in some categories. Equity of access was frequently raised as well as concerns about waiting lists. People were increasingly concerned about the lack of flexibility in the delivery of services, including meeting the needs of those with caring commitments.

Persons of different religious/political affiliation

It was alleged that there was inadequate funding for mental health services particularly in deprived Catholic areas where, partly because of the legacy of intercommunity conflict, there was a high level of need evidenced by the incidence of suicides among young people and in particular, young males. In some areas, as with employment and further education, there was a perceived chill factor which inhibited people from accessing health and other public services. People from disadvantaged rural areas had difficulty accessing acute hospital and other health services, due to lack of access to private transport, inferior roads and poor public transport provision. It was claimed that there was disparity in health status between Protestants and Catholics – and that more Nationalists suffered from health problems, although this may be largely related to social and economic characteristics.

In summary, our discussions produced the following possible topics for monitoring:

- Funding for health services by area against need
- Extent of chill factors in accessing services
- Health status measures by religion.

Men and women generally

We were told that one of the biggest issues impacting on men's health was their reluctance to approach primary care early enough for conditions to be detected and treated. Two key factors were suggested: the "macho instinct" and the fact that surgery times were inconvenient for many men in employment (particularly self employment) as well as for men who were carers or in full time education.

For women, it was contended that the lack of access to abortion services was a major health consideration and that rationalisation of hospital services in some areas could limit choice in maternity services.

Marital status / Persons with dependents

Access to health services was again seen as a key issue for people with dependents and/or caring responsibilities. Hospital visiting costs were a particular issue of concern for families with disabled children. Additional difficulties were faced by families with children suffering from rare conditions (often travelling long distances to see specialists, lack of financial help, difficulties getting time off work, staying locally, managing the needs of other children while away, etc).

It was also pointed out that caring could have an adverse impact on health, viz back problems, stress and impact on mental health (see Health and Social Well-being Survey 1997 – Carers’ Module). Access to health services was an issue because of appointment times and need for flexibility. Carers often neglected their own health while caring for others.

In summary the following possible topics for monitoring were suggested:

- There should be a wider use of surveys to establish the true extent of caring (Note that the percentage in receipt of care allowance is not an accurate indicator: high level of informal caring which is not recognised.)
- The extent of flexibility in provision of services to meet the needs of people with dependents/carers
- Survey material on carers’ health issues.

Persons from different racial groups

A paper ‘Delivering on Equality, Valuing Diversity: A report examining the impact of ethnicity on health needs and relevant statutory service provision in Northern Ireland.’ recommended the routine collection of ethnic data on all NHS patients. This should fall within the minimum data set proposed for all NHS consumers.

Language could be a significant barrier for ethnic minority members in accessing health services, particularly primary care. Often there was a lack of information in an appropriate language and there were difficulties in booking an appointment and in communicating with the GP and other staff. It was put to us that the key was not

simply to provide an interpreting service but to have bilingual or multi-lingual staff at the service delivery point. Comprehension difficulties in relation to health care deterred people from seeking help/advice and resulted in neglect of personal health.

In summary, and in accordance with the recommendations of the report outlined above, it was suggested that there should be monitoring of the following:

- Population Monitoring: (e.g. census) although there have been indications of under-reporting, it serves to focus the attention of policy makers and service providers to meet the needs of the population they serve
- Monitoring variations in health: Investigation of potential significant variations in health documented across UK in relation to geographic area should incorporate a question on ethnicity
- Monitoring the health status of different black and ethnic minority communities
- Monitoring service utilisation: routine data collection on health promotion, primary care, outpatient and inpatient and support services should include ethnic coding
- Monitoring the effectiveness of interventions: this is essential in the face of increasing demands and finite resources
- Monitoring the individual's experiences and satisfaction with services provided. Appropriate consideration should be given to measuring views of consumers from Ethnic minority groups as some are less vocal than others, which may reflect a cultural code of behaviour, language or other cultural barrier (e.g. position of women in some cultures)
- Monitoring employment and equal opportunities practices.
- The number of GP surgeries and other health facilities employing front line staff with multi-language skills
- The distribution of ethnic minority members across primary care services in an area. (An even distribution might suggest that they are all offering ethnic minority friendly facilities.)

Persons of different sexual orientation

We were told that the LGBT Community had quite specialised health care needs, both in terms of access and treatment. Mental health professionals, social workers and other health workers were apparently in need of sexual orientation training. There

were also problems arising from restrictions on the hospital visitation rights of same sex partners and the practice of GPs and other service providers in recording of sexual orientation on medical records could lead to discrimination by insurance companies. It was argued that LGBT people should have full access to reproductive services such as IVF.

In summary, the following possible topics for monitoring were suggested:

- The availability of information on LGBT services and organisations in hospitals, GP surgeries, GUM clinics, public libraries etc
- The reversal of the current ban on blood donations from gay men
- The availability of sexual health education which includes the special needs of lesbians
- The availability of condoms (and dental dams) in public buildings.

Persons with a disability

We were told that people were often expected to behave in line with their disability or medical diagnosis. There was particular concern about Social Services, and a feeling of a general presumption that all disabled people were vulnerable. By no means all disabled people were in need of services. Physical access to GP and dental surgeries was frequently a problem and there was a concern that emergency services did not cater for example for wheelchairs: there was a need for understanding that 'equipment was part of the individual'. It was also suggested that there was some evidence that young disabled people were not routinely offered, for example, cervical screening, breast screening, and other preventative measures.

It was also put to us that programmes should be aimed at helping disabled people to move on and through the service – using services as a temporary measure and that a health strategy should be about empowering rather than protecting.

In summary, the following possible topics for monitoring were suggested:

- Access to well woman/ well man/ reproductive services to counter assumption that disabled people are asexual
- Obstacles to people in residential care becoming partners and having relationships
- Convenient access to emergency service vehicles for people in wheelchairs
- Uptake of preventative measures by young disabled people
- Perceptions of standards of service among people with disabilities

- General outcomes for people with disabilities.

Persons of different ages

The discussion on health focused on issues relating to the poorer standards of health suffered by older men by comparison with older women, and the corresponding measure that men died younger than women. This was in part attributed to the fact (as pointed out to us at the Men's health Project) that men were less inclined to seek medical advice than women. There were also concerns about access and affordability of nursing and residential care and it was claimed that there was inconsistency in provision across the 17 Health Trusts. Groups representing older people had combined to create a lobby for the introduction of free personal care in nursing homes (in addition to free nursing care) but in spite of encouraging signals by individual political parties, the concept had been rejected by the Assembly.

CHAPTER 4 INCOME/WEALTH

General

We were not offered a great deal in this area given that what people regarded as the key determinants of income and wealth, Employment and Education, had already been covered.

Persons of different religious/political affiliation

A perception was voiced that the black economy was very strong in working class Catholic areas.

It was put to us that as there were more Catholics in disadvantaged areas, there were more poor Catholics generally.

Issues to be monitored:

- Income levels between Catholics and Protestants.

Men and women generally

It was put to us that men on average earned more than women for doing the same jobs and it was argued that there should be equal pay for work of equal value.

Issues to be monitored:

- Differentials in average earnings between men and women
- Comparisons in earnings between men and women on a job or occupation-specific basis.

Marital status / Dependents

Given that caring impacted adversely on people's ability to earn it was likely that those caring the longest would be the poorest.⁴ The view was expressed that the Carers Allowance needed to be increased to the same level as other income replacement benefits. There was also criticism of the current tax credit regime which provided for the woman to be paid the credit even where her male partner was the primary carer.

⁴ Eileen Evason research for the Equality Commission on the cost of caring.

Persons from different racial groups

It was noted that there was a need for ethnic minority statistics to be carefully disaggregated and for corresponding flexibility in the application of statistical significance/confidence intervals. For example, the comparative wealth between the Asian and Chinese communities could distort the overall figures for ethnic minority members (with Travellers at the other end of the scale).

The requirement to produce a utility bill in order to open a bank account was said to disadvantage those economic migrants whose employment was tied through an agent to their housing. The consequential payment of wages in cash gave rise to social and economic difficulties. Agents deducted rent from pay, a practice of questionable legality. This left the worker in a kind of economic trap, with limited choices and limited opportunities for escape.

For monitoring, see issues relating to employment.

Persons of different sexual orientation

The fact that same-sex partnerships had (at the time of consultation) no legal status⁵ had implications beyond welfare entitlements to housing, treatment of dependents, inheriting property if partner died, major tax issues, access as carers or partners to the seriously ill in hospital.

Persons with a disability

It was claimed that some 70% of disabled people lived on benefits and were on or about the poverty line. Disability related income was often used for general household expenditure and the income of disabled people was assessed constantly. It was suggested that there should be more safeguards for those disabled people who wanted to test themselves in the world of work and there was a need for a longer transitional period before benefit was removed.

Difficulties in accessing life insurance and mortgages made property ownership problematic.

⁵ The Civil Partnership Act (2004) came into operation in Northern Ireland on 19th December 2005 affording same-sex civil partnerships equal treatment on a wide range of legal matters with married couples (see: www.direct.gov.uk).

People of different ages

The issues highlighted in this context were closely associated with those raised in the context of employment and social security (the erosion of the value of the state pension).

CHAPTER 5 CRIME AND JUSTICE

General

There was a close relationship between crime levels (and therefore vulnerability to crime) and social deprivation. Drugs and alcohol misuse were increasing problems for 11+ youths. Working class people generally were more vulnerable to crime and to fear of crime.

Persons of different religious/political affiliation

There was a perception expressed that criminals were much more likely to be apprehended in Protestant than in Catholic areas. Another perception expressed was that Nationalists received harsher penalties than Unionists for similar crimes and had a rougher time from police (particularly in the marching season), and that police response times in Catholic areas were too high. The republican view was that Catholic communities were disadvantaged by the absence of acceptable and accountable policing and some people in some communities had provided alternative ways of dealing with criminals.

It was put to us that any greater degree of criminality in Catholic areas might be attributable to:

- recidivism allegedly being encouraged by a Special Branch policy of protection for informers; and
- a policy of criminalising political activists.

The need was also suggested for data on the number of people in Catholic areas (particularly West Belfast) who had been through the prison system and the number of young male Nationalists who had been imprisoned.

Men and women

We were told that ninety per cent of those entering the criminal justice system were males and that men were much more likely to be sent to prison than were females, particularly females with children. Women on the other hand were significantly under-represented on the Judiciary and in other areas of the legal profession.

Marital status / Persons with dependents

Major problems were experienced by people with children where one partner (usually the male) had been imprisoned. Research had shown a high risk of offending among young males whose father was in prison. In addition, families could be stigmatised because of the imprisonment of one member and there was a need for special support networks to sustain them during, and immediately after, the period of imprisonment. The treatment of family members during visiting at prisons could be humiliating and those with young children had special child care needs.

In summary, a number of possible topics for monitoring were suggested:

- The provision of visitor support facilities for the families of prisoners
- The provision of special support services for families with a member in long term imprisonment
- Incidence of offending among those who have a parent who has been imprisoned
- Qualitative information on the problems facing prisoners' families.

People from different racial groups

There was a perceived increase in racially-motivated attacks, but whether this was attributable simply to increased media coverage was unclear.

People from ethnic minorities felt foul of the law because they often didn't have a full understanding of it. We were told that the PSNI tended to target ethnic minority members for easy results, for example for not having car insurance or car tax. We were also told that the TV licensing authorities had deliberately launched a campaign against ethnic minority members living in agency accommodation where televisions were often supplied as standard whether the occupants wanted them or not. It was suggested that the approach was not necessarily racist but the outcome was.

In the criminal justice system there was thought to be a need for interpreters provided by the court/PSNI/Solicitor to be up to an acceptable standard. The importance of this was that inaccurate translation of nuances in interpretation could have a major impact on the outcome of a trial.

In summary, it was suggested that monitoring should cover the following:

- The number of people who have been charged/prosecuted under the Harassment Order on cases relating to ethnic minority members. (The Protection Against

Harassment Order (NI) 1997 makes harassment on two or more occasions a potentially criminal offence.)

- Charges relating to hate crimes against ethnic minority members (To be monitored by the Community Safety Unit of the NIO)
- How the groupings are represented in the number of people stopped and apprehended by police and the extent to which this is representative of the ethnic minority representation in the community
- The provision of training in community relations issues to acceptable standards for the Police
- Agreement on standards of interpretation provided by the courts/PSNI/solicitors.

Persons of different sexual orientation

There were concerns about homophobic attitudes in the PSNI although we were told that the Policing Board was soon to commission attitudinal research on sexual orientation (subsequently published)⁶. A recommendation to set up an inter-departmental working group had not yet been implemented. There were no sanctions for not engaging in “equality mainstreaming”. The PSNI needed to make links with forces elsewhere in learning how best to deal with hate crime – it was claimed that 23 forces in Great Britain had come together to deal with hate crime and had produced some excellent material. Of particular relevance is research carried out by HRCNI and published in 2001. (The main findings of this research are given in Appendix B.) In summary, it was suggested that monitoring should include the following:

- Data on levels of assault and abuse suffered by LGBT people.
- Incidence of hate crimes against LGBT people
- Availability of arrangements to ensure equal treatment of LGBT prisoners: sexual health; conjugal visits, issues arising from HIV / AIDS status, such as medication regimes.

Persons with a disability

We were told of concerns that the recently introduced ASBOs might be used inappropriately for people with behavioural disorders/mental health difficulties, and the homeless. There were also concerns about the accessibility of courts and police

⁶ See: www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/publications/pol_acc_gb.htm

stations and that abusers should be treated no more leniently on account of a disability.

In summary, it was suggested that monitoring should cover the following:

- Accessibility to services in courts
- Attitudinal information about how RMs and Judges make adjustments for disabled people: what training are judges given on diversity?
- Electoral staff attitudes to people with learning difficulties
- Accessibility of ballot boxes: - are they too high? – are there templates for blind people?
- Extent to which disabled people are victims of hate crimes following the inclusion of disability in the hate crimes legislation
- Accessibility for disabled prisoners and prisoners' disabled family members

Persons of different ages

In spite of media coverage that suggested otherwise, older people were less likely to be victims of crime (all types). Conversely, the fear of crime amongst the elderly, which had a significant negative impact on quality of life, was increasing out of proportion to the reality and a strategy (which had been promised by the community safety unit but never delivered) for crime and older people was badly needed. We were also told that inter-generational initiatives in which older and younger people jointly engage in activities, and which were largely designed to support young people at risk of offending, had proved very beneficial for all involved (both young and old).

In summary, our discussions suggested that the following topics should be monitored:

- Incidence of crime against older people
- Surveys relating to fear of crime amongst older people
- Availability of resources for inter-generational activities

CHAPTER 6 SOCIAL SECURITY

General

While there were concerns about what were regarded as discriminatory outcomes in some areas of benefit provision, particularly as they affected men and women, it was recognised that legislation in this area was outside the ambit of a local administration.

Persons of different religious/political affiliation

The case was made that the locations of social security offices for people in certain areas (for example Portadown, Short Strand and Twinbrook) were hostile to Catholics/Nationalists/Republicans. It was suggested that there was a need for research into differential levels of abuse of the social security system and the possible impact on the labour market.

Men and women generally

It was contended that the Child Support Agency did not pursue errant mothers with the same zeal as they did fathers.

Marital status / Persons with dependents

No particular issues raised.

Persons from different racial groups

We were told that immigrants could be deprived of access to benefits and accommodation because of delays in being allocated a National Insurance number. There was a need for racial awareness training of SSA staff in areas where people of different racial groups were a significant minority.

Persons of different sexual orientation

Those in same-sex relationships were not treated as “partners” by the SSA⁷.

⁷ See footnote 5

Persons with a disability

We were told that the Welfare to Work programme was intruding on the lifestyles of many people with a genuine disability, and that an increase in checks / monitoring was causing alienation and fear. The receipt of benefits was sometimes regarded as a negative reinforcement of a condition / disability; there is an extra cost of living associated with disability regardless of circumstances. Disabled people are the second biggest client group of the Social Security Agency. There was a feeling that judgements were being made about whether people were 'deserving' enough.

People of different ages

The main concern in this area related to the number of older people who were not receiving benefits to which they were entitled and erosion in the value of the state pension. In this respect, information was key as it was the people who were most socially excluded who did not have access to information about benefits.

In summary, it was suggested that the following should be monitored;

- Availability of resources for providing information about benefit entitlement, specifically directed at older people
- Estimates of amounts of unclaimed benefits by older people

CHAPTER 7 FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

Persons of Different Religious Belief and Different Political Affiliation

No particular issues raised.

Men and women generally

A number of the advocates to whom we spoke suggested that flexibility in the workplace was as important as, for example, rates of pay. It was also felt that the assumption that women were the best child carers needed to be challenged, particularly when this is extended into law and children become an item of property.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored:

- A reduction in the number of cases that go to court to resolve the custody issue and a corresponding increase in the number of cases resolved out of court;
- An increase in the level of support available to males outside court;
- An expansion of the family mediation system which is currently being piloted;
- An increase in the number of parenting courses in Northern Ireland.

Marital status / Dependents

No major issues raised.

Persons from different racial groups

It was suggested that a higher level of home ownership among Asians and Chinese had led to overcrowding due to reluctance to rent accommodation. This is particularly problematic where extended families are living together. The need for culturally appropriate child care provision and culturally appropriate respite care provision was also highlighted.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored:

- The extent of overcrowding in minority ethnic group households;
- The level of provision of culturally appropriate childcare;
- The level of provision of culturally appropriate respite care.

Persons of different sexual orientation

LGBT people were said to face specific problems in relation to family and household structure. The consultation identified a range of concerns, with the key theme being the need for same-sex partnerships to be afforded the same rights and respect as heterosexual ones.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored in relation to LGBT people:

- Changes in succession, inheritance and property rights;
- Parenting, adoption, and surrogacy;
- Pensions and insurance;
- Immigration;
- Custody issues;
- LGBT carers;
- Recognition of 'families' as 'families of choice';
- Access to information on LGBT families; and
- Care for elderly LGBT people.

Disability

In Northern Ireland, although one family in four was said to be affected by disability little research was being conducted to understand better the impact on the family and household.

The following suggestion for monitoring was made:

- More research on the impact that disability has on family life, including the impact on relationships and the health of other family members.

People of different ages

No particular issues raised.

CHAPTER 8 CULTURE/SOCIAL CAPITAL

Persons of Different Religious Belief and Different Political Affiliation

There were divergent views about Government and District Council support for cultural festivals, the Irish and Ulster Scots languages and culture, the Twelfth of July vs. St. Patrick's Day, etc.

Men and women generally

It was suggested that men were less likely than women to have social networks and older men in particular were more likely to become isolated. It was felt that the extent of this should be measured, with a focus also on strategies to enhance social provision for men generally. One suggested indicator was the proportion of men connected / allied to a social / community network.

On the other hand we heard a strong argument for the advancement of women in public life, with an emphasis on full and equal political participation. The point was made that few political parties were themselves doing anything to promote the ethos of Section 75, by, for example, welcoming people from other religions, welcoming women or facilitating participation by people with dependents.

It was also suggested that women were under-represented on public bodies, particularly at Chair and Vice-Chair levels.

It was acknowledged that Northern Ireland had a higher degree of social cohesion than other regions in the UK and a significant community infrastructure. There were however concerns about a possible diminution of 'social capital' without an increase in public investment. In developing this type of initiative there was a belief that public expenditure on 'community' needed to be monitored to ensure equality of opportunity for all groups, and that a condition of such funding should be the level of goodwill / links with 'other' communities.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored:

- The proportion of men connected / allied to a social or community network
- The level of public expenditure invested in 'community'
- The level of investment in the 'social economy'
- The level of social capital
- The numbers of women serving on public bodies

- The numbers of women serving as chair or vice chair of public bodies
- The remuneration of women on public bodies by comparison with men.

Dependents and Marital Status

No significant issues raised.

Persons of different racial groups

Consultees noted the problems associated with the physical dispersal of many ethnic groups in Northern Ireland. For example although members of the Indian community are highly dispersed they have a strong collective sense. However a more effective public transport system would facilitate greater integration and social cohesion.

The dissemination of information about activities or entertainment specific to minority ethnic groups was raised, with a call for greater investment in the promotion of 'other' cultures. It was felt that how different groups access information in this regard needs to be monitored, as does support for organisations supporting minority ethnic groups.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored:

- Amount of public funds allocated to promoting the cultures of minority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland;
- Level of resources directed at organisations that provide support to minority ethnic groups such as NICEM;
- Availability of information / information packs, in native languages, promoting cultural diversity in Northern Ireland;
- The heterogeneity of minority ethnic cultures and the risks associated with confusing community with population.

Persons of different sexual orientation

The importance of recognising the existence of a gay culture in N Ireland was stressed, as was the need to see evidence of support for gay festivals / entertainment etc.

The following suggestions for monitoring were made:

- The allocation of public funds to festivals / public entertainment promoting gay culture.

- The proportion of public representatives who have attended awareness and diversity training on sexual orientation.

Persons with a disability

It was felt that perceptions of community among disabled people needed to be measured, along with how they value their contribution to society. There was a concern that disabled people were not valued as ‘net contributors’ to society, and that community networks and infrastructure have been built around non-disabled people. A range of barriers to inclusion were highlighted, including: poverty; access to information; physical access; lower self-esteem; sport / entertainment etc. It was also suggested that “society” here was reluctant to promote positive role models for disabled people, with the consequence that many might be seen as lacking equality of opportunity in interacting with society. Areas where this may be the case include: entertainment; churches; evening classes etc. The point was also made that many disabled people have are victims of the Northern Ireland conflict, and are more likely to identify with their political / religious peers, rather than their disability.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored:

- Attitudes to ‘community’ and the value to society of people with a disability;
- Views of disabled people on social capital / connectedness with social, economic and political environments;
- Barriers to community integration;
- The proportion of organisations focusing on civil issues / citizenship for disabled people;
- Allocation of funding / resources on issues other than basic services;
- Assessment / measurement of identify among disabled people.

(note that all of the above should be compared with the views / experiences of non-disabled people)

Persons of different ages

Older people made a significant contribution to social capital through voluntary activity, although this was not included in the definition of economic activity. Older people were increasingly participating in sport and this had been recognised in recent

grants from the National Lottery towards the “Actively Ageing” initiative and a similar grant from the Sports Council. Active engagement in sport was seen as particularly beneficial for older people in both a health and a social context. It was also suggested that older people were more likely to make use of parks and other open spaces, features that did not enjoy the same levels of investment as their indoors counterparts.

In summary, it was suggested that the following should be monitored:

- Recognition of the contribution that volunteering by older people makes towards the social economy
- Availability of resources to support active engagement in sport by older people
- The number of sports that include a “masters/veterans” sector
- Use of parks and other open spaces and availability of resources for their maintenance/enhancement.

CHAPTER 9 HOUSING

Persons of Different Religious Belief and/or Different Political Affiliation

A number of those we consulted raised the issue of a significant level of unmet housing need in the Catholic Community, particularly in North Belfast. Two factors were suggested:

1. territorialism and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's 'sectarian allocation' approach, which was felt to be at odds with their declaration that housing allocation was based on need
2. Housing Associations were not able to build quickly enough to meet demand, with the Regional Strategy reportedly predicting a significant shortfall in provision (22%) within Nationalist areas, particularly rural ones.

There was also a concern that as housing shortages result in higher house prices, this might have a disproportionate impact on Catholics who wish to become homeowners given their relatively lower incomes.

The following suggestion for monitoring was made:

- Allocation of public sector housing by religion.

Men and women generally

In relation to homelessness NIHE give priority to women, and women with children together in spite of the fact that the vast majority of homeless people are male.

The following suggestion for monitoring was made:

- A gender analysis of the NIHE's response to homelessness.

Marital status / Persons with dependents

Issues highlighted included the rehousing of a carer when he/she gives up their own home or tenancy to provide live-in care. Long delays in the payment of disabled facilities grants, and in the timescale for getting adaptations completed, were major housing issues for carers and their dependents. It was suggested that in future new houses needed to be built to the more demanding 'lifetime homes standard', which would require minimum adaptation should a home owner or tenant's circumstances change. Concerns were expressed regarding delays in having homes modified / adapted for disabled children, given the evidence that such adaptations usually have a

major impact on the quality of life of the child. Finally, the problems faced by young people with children in accessing public sector housing were raised, with the view that the housing allocation 'points system' needed to be more sensitive to this grouping.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored:

- The impact on those giving up their home / tenancy to provide live in care;
- The time taken for payment of disabled facilities grants;
- The timescale for adaptations to be completed;
- The proportion of new builds meeting the 'life-time homes' standard;
- Waiting times for having homes modified for children with disabilities;
- The impact of the housing allocation 'points system' on young people with dependents.

Persons of different racial groups

The cost of housing in the private rented sector means that many in the ethnic minority communities can have access only to the lower end of this market, which is confined to areas with existing social problems, including racist attacks. The increase in property values has put home ownership out of the reach of the majority of the new ethnic minority population. In rented accommodation, property intended for a single family is being used for multi-family occupation. As we pointed out above, in certain provincial towns employment for many ethnic minority members is tied with their accommodation, with the concern that should they move job they will in turn lose their home. There is also the problem of overcrowding, particularly in the Asian and Chinese communities, with extended families living in one house due to a cultural reluctance to rent accommodation. Finally, it was also noted that there is a lack of appropriate sites for Travellers.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored:

- Allocation of public sector housing to minority ethnic groups including the level of applications;
- Level and standards of provision of Traveller halting sites;
- Level of satisfaction among Travellers with existing provision;
- Level of ring-fenced resources within DSD for Traveller housing issues;

- The impact that being tied into employment agents has on housing choice and quality among minority ethnic groups.

Persons of different sexual orientation

In relation to sexual orientation, there was concern around whether the allocation of public sector housing was being equality proofed against all of the S75 categories, as well as calls for more transparency regarding the operation of the points system. It was suggested that the allocation procedures and processes should be reviewed to identify if there were any inherent biases.

The fact that DSD was responsible for overall housing policy in Northern Ireland was seen as a barrier to progress, with the concern that sometimes changes in housing policy were slow to filter through to the NIHE. Also it was stated that if someone who was gay or lesbian was attacked in their home, they did not get the same number of points as someone else, because it was not classified as a hate crime. It was felt that the NIHE should have delegated responsibility for this issue.

According to one of the consultees, a major limitation of the Homeless Strategy was that gay and lesbian people do not feature, given that a major concern is the problem of 16 year olds “coming out” and being made homeless by their parents. Parents are now obliged to take child back and this, it is argued, leads to more pressure on the child. It is lawful for a private landlord to ask a tenant to leave if there is evidence that he is gay.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored:

- The equality proofing of the allocation of public sector housing with a specific focus on the application of the points system by the NIHE;
- Delegation of responsibility from DSD to NIHE regarding the classifying of attacks as race hate crimes;
- Legislative change within DSD / NIHE to further promote the interests of LGBT community;
- The impact of omitting any reference to sexual orientation in the Homeless Strategy;
- The housing needs / impact of young LGBT people coming out.

Persons with a Disability

Consultees raised issues of concern about housing and young and older carers, particularly those with a learning or intellectual disability. Older carers had concerns about supported housing and supported living, and worries about what would happen when a dependant with a disability died. Small group homes were seen as a valuable housing resource, and research was needed on the extent of need for this type of housing against current provision.

A further concern related to physical accessibility to housing stock held by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and the need for housing designs which accommodate disability.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored:

- The quantity of group homes mapped against provision;
- The percentage of NIHE's housing stock meeting national accessibility standards for people with a disability;
- Housing / build schemes to ensure that they meet national standards re: physical accessibility for people with a disability;
- The provision of public housing for disabled people in urban areas compared with rural areas. (Concern is that the focus is normally on urban provision.)
- The percentage of disabled people housed in particular locations. (Need to avoid ghettoising provision for disabled people.)
- The percentage of disabled people in 'supported living' environments for which there is a major demand. (Disabled people need encouragement to live independently which in turn requires services to be flexible.)
- The percentage of the housing stock suitable for disabled people / unsuitable;
- Evidence of NIHE developing 'life-time homes' being built to a common standard. Only 3% of disabled people are born with a disability;

Persons of different ages

It was suggested that older people have to wait longer on the housing list than their younger counterparts and that this should be monitored. It was also suggested that the NIHE policy of exclusion of pensioners' bungalows from house sales was discriminatory, although the NIHE had apparently justified this through a concern to protect this aspect of the housing stock from erosion.

CHAPTER 10 TRANSPORT

Persons of Different Religious Belief and Different Political Affiliation

No significant issues raised.

Men and women

No significant issues raised.

Marital status /Persons with dependents

No significant issues raised.

Persons from different racial groups

The major issue relates to the dispersed communities and the need for a public transport system which encourages regular contact / communication. It was felt that limitations in public transport and the relatively low incomes of members of particular minority ethnic groups meant that choice was limited. There were also concern about how welcoming the public transport system is, and it was suggested that providers of public transport services should engage more meaningfully with minority ethnic groups.

In a recent case in Dungannon it was alleged that members of a minority ethnic group were being targeted by PSNI regarding tax, insurance, vehicle test certificate etc.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored:

- Satisfaction with public transport among minority ethnic groups;
- The number of ethnic minority people who have access to a car which is roadworthy, tax and insured.

Persons of different sexual orientation

There was concern at the alleged degree of homophobia among Translink staff and passengers. To address this perception it was suggested that Translink staff would benefit from cultural awareness and diversity training.

There were also fears about the personal safety of LGBT people being picked up in private taxis from outside known gay clubs / bars, and being brought home.

In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored:

- The provision and uptake of equality and diversity training for Translink staff;

- The allocation of resources to research safety concerns around both public and private transport services.

Persons with a disability

Among disabled people there was a higher proportion of car ownership due to greater need. One consultee reported that there had been a significant amount of work carried out on accessibility, although there was a need to examine the transport difficulties experienced by children with a disability travelling to school / accessing education. On the whole there was a belief that public transport had improved, but there can still be difficulties in getting out of one's house; getting to the bus / train station; boarding the bus / train etc;. How people with a disability are treated by providers also needed to be addressed. The view was also expressed that much of the improvement in public transport services for disabled people had been in urban rather than rural areas. In summary, our discussions suggested the following be monitored:

- Availability of transport programmes for people with disabilities in rural areas.
- Availability of transport for children with a disability, particularly re: getting to and from school.

Persons of different ages

The introduction of free public transport was regarded as one of the significant successes of the devolved administration. That said, it was also pointed out that some of the poorest older people in rural areas where there was no public transport infrastructure, who did not have access to private transport had derived no advantage from this concession. It was therefore suggested that in rural areas the free pass should be extended for use on other forms of transport such as taxis.

CHAPTER 11 MISCELLANEOUS POINTS

General

There is disparity in standards of service provision between disadvantaged and affluent areas, in terms of

- Street cleaning
- Condition of/provision of new roads
- Public amenities
- Leisure services
- Services and facilities for youth

West Belfast suffers a particularly high level of air pollution.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF THOSE CONSULTED

Gregory Campbell MP MLA	DUP
Helen Ferguson	Carers Northern Ireland
Colin Fowler	The Men's Project
Pip Jaffa	Parents Advice Centre
James Knox	Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO)
Patricia Lewsley MLA	SDLP
Bernadette McAliskey	South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP)
Frances McCandless	NICVA
Nuala Morris	Contact a Family
Dermot Nesbitt MLA	UUP
Dr Dara O'Hagan/Chrissie McAuley	Sinn Féin
Fr Aidan Troy	Holy Cross R.C. Church, Belfast
Dr Donald Watts	Presbyterian Church
Monica Wilson	Disability Action
Patrick Yu/Tansey Hutchinson	NI Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM)
Ann Hope	NIC/ICTU
Bronagh Hinds	QUB
Paddy White	Youthlink
David McConnell	Age Concern

APPENDIX B

Main findings of research carried out by HRCNI – Enhancing the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People – published in 2001.

- Laws, policies and practice in Northern Ireland discriminate extensively against lesbian, gay and bisexual people.
- This discrimination has significant adverse impact on the emotional, physical, social and economic rights, entitlements, needs and interests of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.
- This discrimination pervades most areas of law, policy and practice, including: criminal law, employment, education, health care, housing, immigration, and the taxation and social security systems. Such discrimination is embedded in the nature and effect of laws regarding the family and partnerships, which deny carers and dependents rights in, for example, succession and inheritance.
- The extent of discrimination tends to be hidden because of an absence of research and a fear of “outing” and further discrimination among many lesbian, gay or bisexual people. This is associated with a lower rate of accessing legal services and other remedies among lesbian, gay or bisexual people.
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual people face more burdensome requirements than others in accessing those rights and entitlements that are nominally theirs across a range of laws, for instance in having to make a will instead of relying on intestacy.
- While public authorities are statutorily required to promote equality of opportunity in their policies and services for lesbian, gay and bisexual people, many public authorities show little evidence of policies or practices that affect lesbian, gay and bisexual people.
- Organisations representing lesbian, gay and bisexual people seek an end to discrimination and desire equality under the law.
- International human rights instruments provide protection of the rights of lesbian, gay and bisexual persons.