



Office of the
**First Minister and
Deputy First Minister**
www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk

consultation

on Sexual Orientation Strategy

and Proposed Action Plan

**Proposals for a draft sexual orientation strategy
and action plan
2006 - 2009**

Foreword

Equality is about ensuring that all people are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes and prejudices. Our commitment to equality and human rights as witnessed in the Belfast Agreement has underpinned the development of this strategy and action plan which was itself a commitment of the former Executive. Through our policies and practices we aim to ensure that we challenge inequalities on the grounds of sexual orientation and establish a just and fair society in which everyone can play their full part and where homophobic behaviour is not tolerated.

My vision is for a society in which diversity is welcomed and people are respected no matter what their sexual orientation. We are committed to challenging discrimination and exclusion on behalf of those we represent.

Working with lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) representatives we have been able to identify issues of concern to LGB people. Issues such as health, employment, violence, partnership rights and housing . There are also specific issues for young people, minority ethnic LGB people and lesbian women. Our draft strategy and proposed action plan is the mechanism through which the Northern Ireland departments and the Northern Ireland Office will coordinate their action to address these issues and promote equality of opportunity for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

I would like to record my sincere thanks to everyone who has been involved in its development, particularly those representatives and individuals from the gay, lesbian and bisexual community. I am pleased to present for consultation, our draft three year strategy and action plan to address sexual orientation issues in Northern Ireland. I want to encourage an open, informed and realistic discussion and I would welcome your views on our proposals.

Rt Hon Peter Hain MP

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

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Chapter 1

Introduction

- 1.1 The promotion of equality and human rights is central to the Belfast Agreement. It figured prominently in the Programme for Government in which the former Northern Ireland Executive set out their vision for a community in which equality, human rights, mutual trust and respect are core values, and in which all citizens are able to realise their full potential and live free from fear and prejudice.
- 1.2 This government is likewise committed to achieving equality in relation to sexual orientation and to challenging discrimination and disadvantage on that basis. The current Priorities and Budget gives a commitment *“to bring forward strategic action to address sexual orientation issues”*.

Purpose of this strategy and action plan

- 1.3 Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Northern Ireland face disadvantage and prejudice in their daily lives because of their sexual orientation, or perceived sexual orientation. Many are unable to be open about their sexual orientation for fear of losing their jobs, their homes, their children, the support of family and friends, or becoming the victims of homophobic attacks.
- 1.4 This draft sexual orientation strategy and its supporting action plan are directed at the issues affecting lesbian, gay and bisexual people. It will bring a focus and priority to identifying and addressing the issues and disadvantages that affect the everyday lives and equality of opportunity of LGB people.
- 1.5 The strategy will provide an overarching strategic policy framework within which departments, their agencies and other relevant statutory authorities will channel actions towards an agreed vision, guided by a set of principles and objectives to tackle **specific inequalities and promote equality of opportunity for LGB people across government’s major policy areas**. The strategy will

complement the statutory duty set out in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 which places on public authorities a duty, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between people within nine different categories, including people with different sexual orientations. The duty places at the heart of public policy a proactive approach to the promotion of equality of opportunity and taking action to mitigate adverse impact.

- 1.6 This strategy and action plan will give added impetus and visibility to this legal duty with regard to promoting equality of opportunity for LGB people. It will provide a stronger focus on the requirement to take mitigating action to remove adverse impact on the equality of opportunity for LGB people.

Consultation process

How to respond to the consultation

- 1.7 We would welcome any comments you have in relation to this draft strategy and action plan. In particular, we would like to know whether or not there are any other issues relating to sexual orientation that should be considered for the finalised strategy and action plan.
- 1.8 This consultation document is available on our website www.ofmdfni.gov.uk/gender-equality as well as at the Central Consultation Register at www.consultationni.gov.uk, and from public libraries in Northern Ireland. Copies of the document are being sent to MPs, MLAs, District Councillors within Northern Ireland, church and faith communities and key groups representing gay lesbian and bisexual people as well as to other statutory bodies. Copies of the documents will also be placed in the Assembly and in libraries of the House. Please contact us if you require additional copies or if the document is not in a format that meets your requirements. Our contact details are set out on page 7.

1.9 We intend also to consult with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the Human Rights Commission and the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

1.10 All comments will be treated as public unless otherwise indicated in your response. All comments received will be considered when further developing this strategy.

Next steps

1.11 Following the formal consultation, we will finalise the strategy and the action plan, again working closely with groups and organisations representing LGB people and the departments.

Equality Implications

1.12 We have included at Annex 2 an assessment of the equality implications of the proposals in this document. We consider that the strategy and the actions flowing from it will have a positive impact on equality of opportunity. Any new policies resulting from this work will each be screened by departments and their agencies and relevant statutory authorities, in accordance with the criteria set out in the guidance produced by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. If it emerges that the policy will have adverse implications for equality of opportunity, an equality impact assessment will be carried out and ways of either avoiding or mitigating the effect will be considered. **We would welcome your views on the draft strategy and its equality implications.**

Freedom of Information Act 2000 - confidentiality of consultations

1.13 The Department will publish a summary of responses following the completion of the consultation process. If you would prefer your response to be treated as confidential, please let us know, stating your reasons clearly. Any automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will be taken

to apply only to information in your response for which confidentiality has been specifically requested.

- 1.14 If we are asked to disclose responses under freedom of information legislation, we will take any requests for confidentiality into account. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
- 1.15 We will handle appropriately any personal data you provide in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 1.16 For further information about confidentiality of responses, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office or see website at:
www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk
- 1.17 For further information and/or to respond to this particular consultation, or if you require this document in an alternative format, please contact the consulting branch at:

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THE CLOSING DATE FOR COMMENTS IS 23 October 2006

We look forward to receiving your comments.

Chapter 2

Context

- 2.1 This chapter sets out the context in which this strategy and action plan are being developed and in which they will be implemented.
- 2.2 It is difficult to determine the size of the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) population in Northern Ireland, but international research to date has suggested that approximately one in ten of the population identifies as lesbian, gay or bisexual, and this is a commonly accepted statistic. More recently and perhaps less well known figures from research carried out on behalf of the Government Actuaries Department (GAD) in Great Britain suggest that a more accurate figure is one in sixteen or 6% of the population. On this basis there would be approximately 102,000 LGB people in Northern Ireland.

Social attitudes

- 2.3 While attitudes towards lesbian, gay and bisexual people are changing, and this is to be welcomed, experiences of discrimination and marginalisation are still common for many within the LGB community. The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2004 asked a series of questions of 1800 respondents about their attitude towards LGB people and civil partnerships. The answers reflect a level of support for LGB people and their rights as well as the existence of a significant level of discrimination.
- **36%** of respondents felt that gay, lesbian and bisexual people were generally treated unfairly when compared with other groups;
 - **23%** strongly agreed that gay and bisexual people should not be discriminated against; and
 - **13%** strongly agreed that gay couples should have the same rights as a heterosexual married couple.

“I am made to feel like a second-class citizen. I’m not able to live an ordinary life like everyone else. Waiting for taxis and when you go to non-gay venues, you get verbally abused.” **LASI, A Mighty Silence** ¹

2.4 A survey² of young people in Northern Ireland, who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and or transgender, found that;

44% were bullied at school because of their sexuality;

29% had attempted suicide; and

26% had self-harmed.

Multiple identities and multiple discrimination and disadvantage

2.5 Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are in every walk of life and all sections of the community. Their individual experiences are also shaped by their different multiple identities, e.g. their race, gender, religion, disability and the disadvantage they face are compounded where they experience further discrimination on the grounds of their multiple identities.

“I knew from when I was nine I was lesbian and I only knew from when I was 10 that I was black — it was only when I was called a ‘nigger’. My identity was born through discrimination.” **LASI, A Mighty Silence**

2.6 Homophobic violence has long been an issue for the LGB community in Northern Ireland. The number of homophobic incidents reported to the Police Service of Northern Ireland is increasing: this may be, in part, due to an increase in reporting, but many more incidents remain unreported. Research carried out in 2003 by the Institute for Conflict Research³, found that 82% of respondents have experienced homophobic harassment and 55% had experienced homophobic violence. The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC) in its inquiry into hate crime in Northern Ireland concluded that in its

¹ Mighty Silence , A report on Lesbian and Bisexual Women in Northern Ireland Marie Quirey 2002, Lesbian Advocacy Services (LASI)

² SHOUT, the Needs of Young people in Northern Ireland – Department of Education and YouthNet. 2002

³ An Acceptable Prejudice : Homophobic Violence and Harassment in Northern Ireland – Institute for Conflict Research 20003

view *“the Government must co-ordinate action to ensure that these appalling crimes are eradicated from Northern Ireland society”*.

2.7 The Good Relations Policy and Strategic Framework, the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland, and the sexual orientation strategy and action plan are core elements of this strategic approach.

Legislative framework

2.8 Several important pieces of legislation have been introduced that tackle inequalities with regard to sexual orientation. These are summarised below and followed by proposed new legislation:

- **Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.** These regulations took effect on 2 December 2003. They implement in Northern Ireland the sexual orientation strand of the European Employment Framework Directive (Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment). The Regulations make it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation in employment and vocational training. They prohibit direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, victimisation and harassment.
- **The Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002** and subsequent regulations to that Order are similar to legislation in Great Britain in that same-sex parents in Northern Ireland have rights as individuals in relation to adoptive/parental leave and flexible working.
- **The Criminal Justice (No.2) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004.** This Order provides for increased penalties for offences motivated by hostility towards a person's race, religion, sexual orientation or disability.

- **The Civil Partnership Act 2004.** The Civil Partnership Act received Royal Assent on 18 November 2004 and came into force on 5 December 2005. It creates a new legal status that will allow adult same-sex couples to gain formal recognition of their relationship.
- **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.** This requires designated public authorities in carrying out their functions in relation to Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between a range of equality groups, including persons of different sexual orientations.
- **Human Rights Act 1998.** The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out fundamental rights and freedoms as contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and individuals can now challenge laws in the UK courts if they feel that their rights have been breached by a public authority. If someone believes that a public authority has breached any of their rights they should seek legal advice (or contact the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission) on whether they are entitled to bring a case.

Proposed legislation

- **Single Equality Bill.** The second consultation on the proposed Single Equality Bill was completed in November 2004. It provided an opportunity to consider the extent and nature of protection against discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services for people with different sexual orientations. A summary of the responses received was published in March 2005. Policy issues that arose from the consultation are currently being considered, and Ministers have agreed that the legislation should be brought forward as soon as possible in whichever legislature is available to it.
- **Sexual Orientation - Goods, Facilities and Services.** The Equality Act 2006 gave the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister a power to make regulations for Northern Ireland in relation to protection from discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services parallel to a similar power in Great Britain. The Department of Trade and Industry has just completed consultation on the draft regulations for Great Britain and a consultation document will be

launched shortly in Northern Ireland. It is intended that the final regulations will be made by November 2006.

Role of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

2.9 Under the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's powers were extended in relation to sexual orientation. The functions include:

- a general duty of working towards the elimination of discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity between persons of differing sexual orientations and keeping the Regulations under review;
- discretion to undertake or assist research or educational activities;
- discretion to issue codes of practice in the field of employment and vocational training; and
- discretion to assist individuals in the preparation and presentation of their complaints under the Regulations where there is some special reason for affording assistance.

Role of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

2.10 The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (the NIHRC) is a statutory body, created by the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which works vigorously and independently to ensure that the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland are fully and firmly protected. This includes the human rights of LGB people.

2.11 It has a range of functions including reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness in Northern Ireland of law and practice relating to the protection of human rights, advising on legislative and other measures which ought to be taken to protect human rights, advising on whether proposed legislation is compatible with human rights and promoting understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights in Northern Ireland.

Research and information

- 2.12 The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) has recently published research⁴ on sexual orientation issues in relation to the promotion of equality of opportunity. The key purpose of this was to set the scene for the development of better information and research about the experiences of LGB people in Northern Ireland. The paper concluded that, as is the case elsewhere, there is a lack of reliable qualitative and quantitative data on LGB situations and experiences. It summarises the data and research that is currently available about Northern Ireland and makes recommendations on taking forward a research agenda on the sensitive personal issues of sexual orientation emphasising, in particular, the importance of a consultative and partnership approach to this work, which has been taken into account in developing this strategy and action plan.
- 2.13 OFMDFM also funded a research document on homophobic violence in Northern Ireland, *“An Acceptable Prejudice”*, which notes that LGB communities in Northern Ireland are becoming increasingly visible. The research suggests that homophobia is widespread in Northern Ireland and that there is an increasing need for a diverse range of support services and agencies as well as safe social provision.
- 2.14 Further OFMDFM-sponsored research is currently underway in consultation with LGB and transsexual representative organisations to identify, within the current legislative context barriers, difficulties and challenges LGB people experience in accessing goods, facilities or services, and to identify examples of good or better practice. The findings of this research will serve to validate the anecdotal evidence and issues listed in this consultation document and enable us to respond with greater certainty in addressing LGB issues. This new research is due to be published in December 2006.

⁴ Researching Lesbian , Gay , Bisexual and Transgender Issues in Northern Ireland , Breitenbach E , published by OFMDFM Research and Information Branch www.research@ofmdfmi.gov.uk

Chapter 3

The issues

- 3.1 Our challenge in this strategy and action plan is to **tackle specific inequalities and promote equality of opportunity for LGB people across government's major policy areas.**
- 3.2 Though LGB communities are becoming increasingly visible, research work published by OFMDFM identified a lack of evidence and understanding of LGB issues. To provide an evidence base for our proposals we carried out informal and very insightful consultations with the voluntary and community sector groups and individuals representing LGB people across Northern Ireland. These representatives identified a broad range of policy issues of concern to LGB communities. A number of these affected all LGB people and related to health, employment, crime and justice, partnership and housing issues. Others related to particular members or groups within the LGB communities — such as young people, minority ethnic people and lesbians.
- 3.3 Our new research will further develop our understanding and awareness of the issues facing LGB people and provide a stronger evidence base upon which departments can develop better targeted actions.

3.4 From our extensive preliminary consultations we have identified a number of issues:

1. Lack of awareness	- lack of research and information, ability to participate in consultations, lack of training
2. Violence	- need to support victims of domestic and homophobic violence, need to prevent such violence
3. Education	- adverse impact of homophobic bullying, lack of sex education, need for counselling services, need for teacher training, impact on opportunities for further education, particular needs of youth sector, impact of stereotyping
4. Health	- mental health issues, sexual health issues, suicide rates
5. Housing	- crisis house/safe house, homelessness and prostitution Need for safe, secure environment
6. Same sex parenting	- custody issues, bullying of children of same-sex couples, fostering and adoption
7. Poverty	- increased risk of poverty, barriers to employment and careers
8. Access	- inequality of access to goods and services
9. Economics	- access to employment and job protection

We would welcome your views on these issues.

Please use the response form at Annex 4. Alternatively, the questionnaire can be filled in online at

www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/sexual-orientation/strategy-questionnaire

Chapter 4

Proposed policy framework

4.1 The government is committed to tackling the issues and inequalities based on people's sexual orientation and promoting equality of opportunity for LGB people.

Long-term vision

4.2 Our long-term vision is:

To have a society in which the diversity, equality of opportunity and human rights of all lesbian, gay and bisexual people and their families are safeguarded, and enabled.

Guiding principles

4.3 Underpinning the draft strategy and action plan is a set of guiding principles that will influence all the steps, policies, strategies or actions to be taken by, or on behalf of, the Northern Ireland government departments, their agencies or other relevant statutory organisations to progress towards our vision. Their key function is to shape **the way** policy is designed, delivered, monitored, reviewed and evaluated by government departments and their agencies.

4.4 In taking forward actions, departments, their agencies and or other relevant statutory organisations are committed to:

- adopting a positive and proactive approach to identifying, understanding and responding to the needs and choices of LGB people and their families taking into account the impact of where they live on those needs;
- ensuring that stereotypes do not influence policy development and decision-making processes to adversely impact on LGB people;
- recognising the multiple identities of LGB people (e.g. father, mother, carer, different ethnic origin, people with disability etc) and taking into account the

different impacts that these identities have on their situations and experiences; and.

- promoting a partnership approach in developing effective and inclusive policies and service delivery whereby departments, agencies, statutory bodies, non-governmental, and voluntary and community organisations can work productively together and share best practice.

Proposed strategic objectives

4.5 To achieve our vision departments, their agencies and other relevant statutory authorities will work to achieve the following proposed strategic objectives. These objectives reflect the issues we have identified through our consultations with LGB representatives.

- a. To ensure equality of opportunity for LGB people in **employment** and **training**:
 - to promote equality of opportunity in accessing employment, vocational training and lifelong learning; and
 - to ensure equality of opportunity in employment conditions and career development opportunities.
- b. To ensure equality of opportunity of LGB people in **accessing** and **benefiting** from public services:
 - to provide equality of opportunity in accessing resources, goods and services and to share resources whilst also targeting them towards those of greatest need;
 - to ensure accessible and effective support systems to meet the social welfare needs of LGB people taking into account their multiple identities, and those in greatest need;
 - to develop accessible and effective systems to meet the health and well being needs of LGB people taking into account their multiple identities, and those in greatest need; and

- to develop education and vocational training, for the growth and fulfilment of personal ambitions, interests and talents.
- c. To encourage the **increased participation** and **visibility** of LGB people in society:
- to ensure effective consultation and communication with LGB people in the development and delivery of government policy and services;
 - to implement and monitor equality in rights and responsibilities arising from same-sex relationships;
 - to recognise and support the needs of diverse families including same-sex couples;
 - to build capacity of LGB sector to enable better participation.
- d. To promote an **environment free from harassment and bullying** and to **tackle homophobia** in all forms including violence and abuse:
- to develop more robust measures to tackle homophobic and same-sex related bullying, violence and crime; and
 - to resource support systems for victims of such violence.

Chapter 5

Implementing the strategy

5.1 This chapter sets out how we will work to achieve these strategic objectives through an action plan to tackle the issues, the tools we will use to bring a focus on these issues and ensure that actions to address them are incorporated in policy and programmes, through identifying specific roles for the departments and ensuring the ongoing partnership working with the LGB representatives.

Sexual orientation action plan

5.2 The main emphasis of the action plan is on what can be done through policy and practice to tackle the key issues facing LGB people. Initially there will be a need to develop a clear understanding of the issues and an evidence base to support our proposed actions. This will require further research and ongoing partnership working with LGB representatives.

Tools to be used in developing the action plan

5.3 In keeping with international best practice in the field of equality we will use the tools of **mainstreaming and specific action measures**. We will use mainstreaming to ensure the identified needs of LGB people and their families are recognised and taken account of, where relevant, in policy development and decision-making processes of departments and their agencies. Through the use of specific action measures we will develop actions, where necessary, to tackle specific issues for LGB people.

Impact Assessment Handbook ⁵

5.4 To assist departments to mainstream the LGB considerations into their policies and to assess the impact of their policies on the LGB issues, we have identified we recommend the use of the Gender Impact Assessment Handbook as an effective user-friendly aid which can be used in any impact assessment process, including sexual orientation.

⁵OFMDFM *Gender Impact Assessment Handbook*, Crawley and O'Meara, 2004 available on www.genderequalityni.gov.uk

5.5 The action plan will complement and build upon the work that the Northern Ireland departments and other public authorities are doing under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 by providing a mechanism:

- to **sharpen our focus** on the issues for LGB people;
- to **identify policies** that will address these issues; and
- to **set out targets** and systems under which we will monitor progress and change.

Multiple Identities

5.6 As we have already stated lesbian, gay and bisexual people come from every walk of life and are in all sections of the community. Their individual experiences are also shaped by their different multiple identities e.g., race, gender, religion, disability, and many problems are compounded when they experience further discrimination due to their multiple identities.

Integrating with other equality strategies

5.7 It is important in the consideration of multiple identities and in tackling multiple disadvantage and discrimination that this strategy works with other equality strategies and strategic measures such as those dealing with gender, age, children and young people, race, disability, victims, good relations and poverty.

5.8 Through our action plan we will maintain clear links between this strategy and the other equality strategies and strategic measures which tackle inequalities. We will include actions specific to sexual orientation and shared actions with other strategies to tackle multiple discrimination and disadvantage. Our commitment to collect and analyse data across the section 75 categories will assist in the measurement of the impact of these actions.

A proposed action plan is at Chapter 6.

Monitoring and reporting

- 5.9 The three year action plan will be reported on and updated every year. Departments will assess and report annually on the progress of their actions towards their outcome focussed targets their effectiveness in tackling the specific issues and their progress towards the strategic objectives, providing case studies of good practice.
- 5.10 Each year the departments will also contribute new actions which have been identified over the year to better tackle the issues and to demonstrate the impact of mainstreaming sexual orientation into their policies.
- 5.11 The Gender Equality Unit in the OFMDFM will co-ordinate and publish annually a progress report and revised action plans.

Role of the government departments

- 5.12 Departments will implement the following range of measures as important steps to support the implementation of this strategy. These are:
- having a focal point within each department to facilitate action and to champion the promotion of sexual orientation within the department and to work with OFMDFM to this end;
 - communicating to staff the departments commitment to promote equality of opportunity of all lesbian, gay and bisexual people and their families;
 - ensuring that staff have an awareness and understanding of sexual orientation and issues arising for specific action within the department policy and operational areas;
 - identifying appropriate sexual orientation actions consistent with the strategy's aims and principles, and the departments priorities for inclusion in the action plan;
 - monitoring and evaluating their actions and contribute to the annual reports on the action plans;

- cascading the strategy to non departmental public bodies and other service providers, and encouraging them and/or working with them to ensure its effective implementation; and
- sharing knowledge, expertise and good practice with others.

Working in partnership - the Sexual Orientation Forum

- 5.13 The Gender Equality Unit of OFMDFM has worked closely with the voluntary and community sector groups representing lesbian, gay and bisexual people (LGBs), and we have consulted the Northern Ireland departments.
- 5.14 Our work to date has benefited significantly from engaging with an informal network of representatives from sexual orientation organisations – initially the Sexual Orientation Reference Group, now renamed the Sexual Orientation Forum. This Forum currently comprises 11 representative organisations whose names are included at Annex 1. Its purpose is to facilitate consultation with LGB groups, continue to raise our awareness and understanding of the issues, and assist in finalising this strategy and its action plan.
- 5.15 We propose to continue and develop this partnership working to support the implementation of the final strategy and action plan.

Review of strategy

- 5.16 The strategy will last three years and will be reviewed at the end of this period to assess its effectiveness in tackling the issues identified through consultations with LGB people and the Sexual Orientation Forum. The Gender Equality Unit will publish the review.

Chapter 6

Draft Sexual Orientation action plan

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
Awareness raising (research consultation, publications and training)	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) – published research on LGBT issues in January 2004: 'Researching lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues in Northern Ireland' by Esther Breitenbach available at www.ofmdfmresearch.gov.uk		
	OFMDFM – the research document 'An Acceptable Prejudice? Homophobic Violence and Harassment in Northern Ireland' By Neil Jarman and Alex Tennant, Institute of Conflict Research, was financially supported by OFMDFM		
	OFMDFM – there is further research being carried out to identify, extant barriers, difficulties and challenges experienced in relation to accessing goods, facilities and services and to identify examples of good or better practice. Also proposing to retain the Sexual Orientation Forum (subject to outcomes of this consultation). To include representatives from LGB groups across NI.	OFMDFM – to develop and publish an awareness raising pack on issues relevant to LGB people; the pack will initially be for NI departments.	Research to be published in December 2006. Pack to be produced by March 2007.

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	<p>OFMDFM - will coordinate and develop a sexual orientation strategy and develop a strategic action plan.</p>	<p>OFMDFM will monitor the strategic action plan, and report on it annually.</p>	<p>Due to be issued for consultation in Autumn 2006</p>
	<p>Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)- research commissioned by the Department in 2003 'Barriers to participation in culture arts and leisure' identified issues specific to LGBT community. DCAL plans to address these issues through the work of its Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs).</p> <p>The Community Arts Officer has met with LGB organisations to discuss arts provisions and access to the arts.</p>	<p>The Arts Council is planning to train frontline staff on SO awareness training and will contact Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO) for advice. The Arts Council is also in discussions with DCAL about how best to encourage arts programmes that have an appropriate balance of material reflecting the diversity of society to include LGB themes.</p> <p>Northern Ireland Museums Council is contemplating reviewing their cultural Diversity and Good Relations Policy to examine the need for expansion to include other communities within its scope; this would obviously include LGB people.</p>	

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	<p>Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) - the Department has initiated an internal scoping study in relation to homophobia in the further education (FE) sector in advance of commissioning detailed research . This scoping exercise will determine the extent of the problem and, in so doing, provide an indication of the level of research required. The timing of this research, and its recommendations, will complement the Department’s dissemination of the findings of the cultural diversity pilots over the 06/07 year.</p>	<p>It is expected that the Department will commission a full report into homophobia in the FE Sector in the 07/08 year.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the findings of the scoping study will be available in December 2006.</p>
	<p>Department of Education (DE) – Youthnet study commissioned by Department of Education, ‘Shout: the needs of young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender’, Dec 2003. DE also funded 2 development posts in voluntary and community sector for 2 years, until March 2006. To carry forward issues identified in ‘Shout’ report.</p>		
	<p>Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) - has commissioned research which highlighted inequalities and barriers to accessing health and social services. The findings relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people can be viewed at: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/hss/equality The findings have been taken into account in ongoing policy and strategy development work</p>	<p>There are plans to hold a cross thematic workshop early in 2007 with interested organisations to further consider the issues highlighted and the recommendations contained in the research report.</p>	

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	(e.g. Suicide Prevention Strategy and Sexual Health Strategy).		
	Eastern Health and Social Services Board (EHSSB) - in 2001 published a guide for parents who have lesbian, gay or bisexual children entitled 'Mum, Dad, I've got something to tell you'.		
	<p>Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP)/OFMDFM/Office of Law Reform (OLR) – published a guidance document 'Civil Partnership – what does it mean for you'. Available in hard copy and at: www.dfpni.gov.uk Also produced leaflet entitled, 'Are you considering a Civil Partnership'.</p> <p>DFP – Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) (NI) – published booklets and amended legislation as a result of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 and the Civil Partnership Act 2004, available at: www.civilservicepensions-ni.gov.uk</p> <p>DHSSPS – has helped fund the publication of a booklet called, 'Sex, Drugs, rock'n'dough: the remix', which contains a section on sexuality.</p>		
	Northern Ireland Office (NIO) – is investigating options to better support, encourage and actively promote the departments Diversity Network including its LGB network.		

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
Training	<p>NI Court Service - provides diversity and equality training, a staff support and welfare service and legal advice for all staff. Also has a 'dignity and harmony at work' policy covering all types of bullying and harassment.</p>		
	<p>NI Court Service - has also produced a diversity information pack which specifically includes a card giving information on sexual orientation and the associated issues. CoSO has quality assured this card</p>		
	<p>Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) departments - all members of the NICS receive equal opportunities training. The service has a firm corporate anti bullying and harassment policy, backed up by effective good practice based procedures for the investigation of complaints. While not solely designed for LGB issues, the policy explicitly cites harassment or bullying on ground of sexual orientation as unequivocally unacceptable and provides an effective means for victims to complain and have complaints resolved.</p> <p>There are a wide range of training activities across all NI departments that draw out the issues, rights and equality law that affects people of different sexual orientation. These activities begin at induction stage and pervade management training, recruitment and selection,</p>	<p>The Centre for Applied Learning will work closely with OFMDFM, CPG and the Training Commissioners Group in relation to any outcomes from this action plan which impact on the content and provision of generic training to NICS staff.</p>	<p>Aligned with outcomes from the Action plan consultation in Autumn 06</p>

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	and other relevant development programmes; here are some specific examples of this from across the service:		
	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) – issue information packs, including posters on sexual orientation regulations, to all premises officers. The Department’s Internet site also has a PDF version of the ECNI leaflets on ‘Sexual Orientation in the workplace’. DARD also delivered sexual orientation training in partnership with LASI and CoSO staff. DARD's magazine ‘Groundwork’ had features on sexual orientation awareness in each of its quarterly issues last year.		
	DE – issued a new policy on bullying and harassment. This highlights sexual orientation in terms of misconduct relating to social identity and refers to the equality legislation relating to sexual orientation.		
	DEL - all frontline staff have been issued with a circular on sexual orientation discrimination legislation. Providers of the New Deal programme are also advised of their responsibilities under the legislation in their operational guidelines.		

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	<p>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) - has established a diversity board which identifies diversity priorities and takes action to make DETI a best practice organisation. Initial contact has been made with CoSO and the intention is to invite a CoSO representative to work with the board on future discussions/activities.</p>		
	<p>DFP – is procuring an innovative new diversity awareness training module to help staff recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour, including homophobia</p> <p>DHSSPS – held a Diversity Showcase last year which included sexual orientation as one of the key themes. DHSSPS deliver ‘dignity at work’ training to all staff which also covers sexual orientation. This was followed by training for primary care practices on diversity and equality, CoSO and LASI provided specific input.</p>	<p>Further training involving CoSO and LASI are planned for 2006/2007</p> <p>A consortium of special agencies, led by the Equality Unit of the Central Services Agency, is currently planning a new learning resource on sexual orientation. Engagement with LASI has taken place to explore taking a more strategic approach to promoting positive staff attitudes to diversity on the basis of sexual orientation.</p>	

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	<p>Department For Regional Development (DRD) - training programmes and in-house publications seek to educate staff as to their responsibilities and rights arising from sexual orientation legislation.</p>		
	<p>Land Registers of Northern Ireland (LRNI)– participated in a pilot scheme to measure diversity within the NICS workplace. They used the Diversity Excellence Model and the Agency’s efforts are encouraging and show a consistent improvement in all aspects of promoting more positive attitudes to diversity. This uniquely contained a specific question relating to sexual orientation and this recorded an overall positive percentage rise of 6%. The Agency’s Diversity Committee through its ongoing work will continue to stress the importance of respecting individual differences, including sexual orientation</p>		
<p>Violence (domestic and homophobic)</p>	<p>Cross Departmental – in October 2005 a strategy for addressing domestic violence and abuse entitled, ‘Tackling Violence at Home’ was published; the definition in the strategy will include all victims and acknowledges that domestic violence occurs in relationships irrespective of gender or sexual orientation. Actions under this strategy will seek to provide easily accessible advice and support for all victims of domestic violence. The Rainbow Project is represented on</p>	<p>Action plan for this year to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general public education and media campaigns; • to agree protocols between Victim Support NI and other appropriate voluntary organisations for supporting male victims and victims of 	<p>Future action plans over next five years</p>

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	the newly reconstituted regional steering group on domestic violence.	same-sex relationships; and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to undertake evaluation of the helpline service including services to victims across section 75 groups 	
	Guidelines for employers on domestic violence workplace policies and guidelines for MPs/MLAs highlighted the fact that domestic violence affects people right across society and that people in same-sex relationships, ethnic minorities etc may face additional barriers.		
Homophobic violence	The Criminal Justice (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 introduces increased penalties for offences aggravated by hostility towards victims based on their sexual orientation, race, religion or disability. It also extends the protections of Part 111 of the Public Order (NI) Order 1987 to include sexual orientation and disability, in relation to the incitement of hatred or arousing fear. The legislation commenced on 28 th September 2004.		

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	<p>The Community Safety Unit (CSU) of the NIO – will work in partnership with others to tackle hate crime in all its manifestations, including homophobic crime by working to improve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reporting mechanisms. A pilot hate incident monitoring system (Project RIOH) is being piloted in South Belfast until December 2006 and provides victims and witnesses of all hate incidents, including homophobic incidents, the opportunity to report them to other statutory and voluntary and community organisations;. and • services to victims. A range of schemes are currently under consideration to provide better services to the victims of crime and to consider what practical action can be taken to support such victims. 	<p>The information collected through the pilot will help identify ‘hot spots’ and inform the development of solutions to tackle hate incidents.</p>	
Policing and homophobic violence	<p>Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) – started recording of homophobic incidents in 2000. Recent statistics for 2004/2005 record a 176% rise in reports to police. PSNI believe that this in part demonstrates a greater confidence in the police response and a greater willingness to report to police. Incidents are recorded where any incident is perceived to be homophobic by the victim or any person (crimes and non crimes).</p>	<p>PSNI Service Diversity Unit in partnership with An Garda Siochana has developed a diversity programme which was delivered to every officer. This includes a focus on LGB issues and has been developed in partnership with the relevant NGOs. The same programme is now being rolled out to all staff in PSNI and should be</p>	

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
		completed by end of 07/08 business year.	
	A new hate incident policy has been developed. The policy outlines minimum standards in respect of the recording, investigation and supervision of reported hate incidents.		
	In addition to reporting directly to police online, third party reporting and Crimestoppers is available to encourage those who do not feel that they can directly report to police.		
	A local protocol has been introduced between PSNI in Foyle and the Rainbow Project to specifically address homophobic incidents and suicide.		
	A Police Belfast LGBT Forum has been established. This Forum is attended by police from the four Belfast districts: Lisburn; Castlereagh; Community Safety Branch; and HQ, and meets with LGBT representatives quarterly.		
	PSNI ran a 'Hate Crime is Wrong' campaign on Adshells in six hate incident hotspots last year and again in early 2006 to coincide with the launch of the Hate Incident Policy. A smaller version is available extensively across all 29 districts		

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	<p>The Police Service maintains Minority Liaison Officers in every police district to provide support to victims of homophobic incidents and proactively engage with minority groups.</p>		
<p>Education (homophobic bullying, sex education, counselling services, teacher training, further education, youth sector and stereotyping)</p>	<p>DE – ‘Pastoral care in schools – Promoting positive behaviour’ (2001) contains a section on bullying and particularly mentions that homophobic bullying is unacceptable. This is repeated in the pack issued to post primary schools in 2002. In 2003 it became a legal requirement for schools to have measures to counter bullying as part of their discipline policy.</p>	<p>There are many other related actions being carried out by the Pupil Support Unit focused on anti bullying work including establishing a helpline for pupils and staff and carrying out research of the nature and extent of such bullying.</p>	<p>The work will be carried out during the next business year, to include a quality assurance exercise on schools discipline and anti bullying policies.</p>
	<p>‘Relationships and sex education’ (RSE) document requires schools to develop a policy in keeping with the ethos and moral framework of the school that sets out how RSE will be delivered in the curriculum.</p> <p>There is a particular section produced by Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) which includes (at key stage 4) relationships and sexuality.</p> <p>It acknowledges differences in sexuality and sexual relationships and encourages sensitivity toward different ways of life, beliefs and opinions.</p>	<p>In the revised curriculum which will be introduced from September 2005, RSE will be provided through the new strand of personal development at primary level and personal, social and health education (PSHE) at post-primary level. A more logistical approach is taken in revised curriculum which aims to develop young people as individuals and members of society. Some of the topics covered are aspects of development of the</p>	

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	<p>The guidance further suggests that teachers deliver this education sensitively in a non confrontational manner and in a reassuring way.</p> <p>Counselling services are provided to schools by the education and library boards and funded by the Department of Education. They deal with a range of issues including LGB issues where appropriate.</p> <p>All teachers receive equality training which includes the issue of homophobic bullying.</p>	<p>individual including managing feelings and sexuality.</p>	
Further Education (FE)	<p>In Feb 2006 The Equality Commission for NI hosted a conference on sexual orientation equality in further and higher education. Participants included representatives from the Association of NI Colleges (ANIC), staff in further and higher education, student and trade union representatives, and providers of vocational training. ANIC continue to meet with CoSO to discuss issues relating to FE.</p>		

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	ANIC is represented on a steering group established by the NUS-USI to promote diversity in tertiary education. This group includes representatives from the FE and HE Sectors.		
	The NI Colleges Human Resources Information System (NICIS) has been updated to include reference to sexual orientation. Gay and Lesbian Youth NI (GLYNI) have also trained equality co-ordinators in general awareness training.	It is intended also that monitoring information on students will be included on the NICIS system	
	ANIC, CoSO and the Staff Commission for Education and Library boards held seminars in December 04 as part of Anti Homophobic Week. A workbook was designed which is used in both education sectors, entitled 'Dealing with complaints of harassment on the grounds of Sexual Orientation'. The seminars also provided guidance to staff on dealing with complaints using case studies in the context of legislation.		
	DARD – the Department's College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) includes a clear reference to sexual orientation in the student handbook and provides contact details of LGB support organisations in student handbooks and induction packs.	From September 2006 contact information for local LGB support organisations will also be made available to all CAFRE staff involved in wardening and pastoral care duties. CAFRE also proposes to train all of its staff in SO	

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
		awareness with priority being given to those directly involved in delivery of frontline education	
Health (mental health, sexual health and suicide)	DHSSPS chairs a Regional Equality Liaison Panel, which brings together a range of NGO's with a particular interest in equality issues. CoSO is represented on this group.		
Mental Health	DHSSPS - a 'Promoting Mental Health' strategy and action plan was published by the Department in January 2003. The strategy was developed by an intersectoral working group following wide ranging consultation. The working group were aware of the particular needs of all vulnerable groups, including the LGB community, and research showed that gay men were likely to experience homophobic bullying.	<p>The action plan commits Health and Social Services Boards to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further develop policies and programmes to promote mental health taking account of vulnerable groups; • ensure information on local sources of help and support is developed available and accessible; • develop a suicide awareness programme in each board area; • ensure that a suicide risk assessment training programme is initiated for health and social 	

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
		<p>services personnel and staff in the voluntary and community sectors working with vulnerable people; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and deliver a depression awareness training programme for GPs. <p>An additional action includes a commitment for the DHSSPS in partnership with health and social services (HSS) boards and other professional and voluntary bodies to carry out a review of professional training to ensure that the promotion of mental health and emotional well being is fully included and takes account of the particular needs of disadvantaged groups which includes sexual orientation.</p>	

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
Mental health continued	<p>DSSSPS - allocated £600,000 in the 05/06 year to implement the strategy and action plan. This implementation is ongoing and the group will continue to oversee and monitor the strategy to ensure that the needs of all vulnerable groups including the LGB community are addressed.</p>		
	<p>DHSSPS - Suicide Prevention strategy and action plan. As a result of concern about an increase in the number of suicides, particularly among young people, the Minister, Shaun Woodward MP, established a taskforce in July 2005 to develop a separate Suicide Prevention strategy for Northern Ireland. The task force had representation from health professionals, the statutory sectors and the voluntary and community sectors including The Rainbow Project.</p>		
	<p>Consultation on the draft strategy ended on 21 June 2006. It includes two targets and four actions which focus on marginalised and disadvantaged groups, and specifically includes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups.</p>		

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
Mental Health Continued	<p>DHSSPS – with regard to homophobic bullying and young peoples’ mental health, the Promoting Mental Health strategy commits the Health and Social Services Boards to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a policy for the promotion of mental and emotional health of young children and young people; • develop a regional educational resource for the promotion of pupils’ mental health and emotional well being, including anti-bullying approaches for use in schools; • develop training to support youth workers in understanding early recognition of risk and effective approaches to support young people’s mental health and emotional wellbeing; • implement programmes on awareness of suicide for teachers and youth leaders; and • continue to develop outreach work with young people in areas of need and especially young males 		
Sexual Health	<p>DHSSPS – work is continuing on the development of a Sexual Health Promotion strategy and action plan. The strategy was developed by a multi-sectoral working group, which included LGB representation. The aim of the strategy is to</p>	<p>DHSSPS is planning to hold a “Young Peoples Sexual Health” conference in the Autumn of 2006 aimed at providing advice and information as well as</p>	

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	<p>improve, protect and promote sexual health and wellbeing of the population of Northern Ireland. The strategy also contains a number of objectives and identifies those under 20, those between 20-34, gay and bisexual men and commercial sex workers as priority groups requiring particular action. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a public information campaign to raise awareness and tackle discrimination and stigma associated with HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and sexual orientation; • establishment of multi-disciplinary sexual health forums to co-ordinate local initiatives; and • a commitment from HSS boards and trusts to work in partnership with the voluntary and community sectors to provide training for health and social care professionals to enable them to deal effectively with sexual health issues facing lesbian, gay and bisexual men and women. 	<p>showcasing the services available. Special efforts will be made to cater for young LGBT people.</p>	
<p>Housing (crisis/safe house, homelessness and prostitution, need for safe secure environment)</p>	<p>Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) – sexual orientation issues are a regular feature of the Housing Executive’s consultative forum on equality, and a representation from the Rainbow Project/CoSO sits on the forum’s steering group.</p>		

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	<p>NIHE has developed an equality training strategy for all staff. This addresses section 75 and anti discrimination legislation. Equality bulletins have been circulated to all staff outlining issues on hate crime.</p> <p>Following discussions with representative groups through the consultative forum, NIHE sought and received approval for a change to rule 23 of the Housing Selection Scheme to include intimidation on the grounds of sexual orientation (and disability) as a basis for the award of “intimidation points”.</p> <p>NIHE is working with the Equality Commission to develop monitoring systems in relation to sexual orientation.</p> <p>Work is also ongoing with the Department for Social Development (DSD) and the Rainbow Project on providing an adequate housing response to the problems of homophobic violence and harassment.</p> <p>In Derry/Londonderry the Housing Executive is working with key voluntary and statutory organisations in a partnership protocol to tackle the problem of homophobic harassment, fear of violence, self harm and incidence of domestic</p>		

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	violence between same-sex couples.		
<p>Poverty (increased risk of poverty, barriers to employment and careers)</p>	<p>OFMDFM/Inter Departmental - within the proposals for a Northern Ireland Anti Poverty strategy the statutory obligation to promote equality of opportunity for all section 75 categories, including people of different sexual orientation is fully recognised.</p>	<p>It is proposed that the new strategy will be co-ordinated through a ministerially led inter-departmental and intersectoral forum and provide a high level overarching framework for the co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of departmental policies aimed at tackling poverty</p> <p>These policies will be the subject of full individual equality impact assessments, therefore issues impacting on LGB groups and other vulnerable section 75 groups will be fully assessed during this process.</p>	
<p>Access to good facilities and services</p>	<p>The Civil Partnership Act received ‘Royal Assent on 18th November 2004, and the Act came into effect in December 2005. It creates a new legal status that allows adult same-sex couples to gain formal recognition of their relationship.</p> <p>Sexual Orientation (Goods Facilities and Services) (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 will</p>		

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
Pensions	<p>outlaw discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services, (education and the exercise of public functions). This is due to come into operation in November 2006.</p> <p>The Single Equality Bill (SEB) provides an opportunity to consider the extent and nature of protection against discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services and a recent consultation in 2004 on options for the bill addressed this issue in connection with sexual orientation. Work is continuing in connection with these proposals taking into account Sexual Orientation (Goods Facilities and Services) (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and the Disability Law Review in GB.</p> <p>Northern Ireland Civil Service -the introduction of the Civil Partnership Act will have an impact on the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS (NI)) provisions. The PCSPS (NI) maintains parity of pension arrangement between NI civil servants and their counterparts in the GB pension scheme (the PCSPS).</p> <p>The exact detail of the administrative requirements for partners to qualify for benefit are</p>		

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
	<p>not yet determined. However it is intended that Premium and Classic Plus benefits will continue to be payable based on, in the case of Premium – all the reckonable service of the member, in the case of Classic Plus – on service since the first of October 2002 (with service up to that dealt with in the same way as Classic), and in relation to those members who chose not to move to Premium or Classic Plus- and therefore members of the original pension arrangement – known as Classic – service since 1988 (on production of a Civil Registrations Certificate) in accordance with the provisions of the Act.</p> <p>It should be noted that while partner or spousal pensions payable under the Classic Plus (from October 2002) and Premium arrangements are paid for life, these benefits under Classic are only payable until remarriage or cohabitation with a spouse or partner.</p> <p>Amendments have been made to PCSPS (NI), CSCS(NI), CSIBS(NI) and associated scheme regulations in light of Civil Partnership Legislation.</p> <p>DSD – the department has amended operational procedures and forms to reflect the new policy amendments made as a result of the Civil Partnership Act. The content of all equality training programmes has also been amended to</p>		

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
Access to Information and Resources	<p>reflect this.</p> <p>CSA – the Child Support Agency has also amended procedures to reflect the Civil Partnership Act.</p> <p>The Eastern Health and Social Services Board (EHSSB) has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Rainbow Project. This is known as The Spectrum Project and was established to facilitate a behavioural change environment by meeting the inclusive self identified needs of gay men in the EHSSB area. A number of initiatives are underway to increase gay men’s access to relevant information and resources.</p> <p>In addition, the SLA makes provision for counselling services to individuals and groups of gay men resident in the EHSSB’s area.</p>		
Adoption	<p>Currently gay and lesbian couples cannot jointly adopt children in NI, although it is possible for one person in the relationship to adopt as an individual. As a result of a review of adoption services proposals for change have been</p>		

Key area	Current action/action to date – by dept/organisation	Future proposals	Comment
Tourism	<p>developed which include extending joint adoption to civil partners and unmarried couples (whether of different sex or same sex), living as partners in an enduring family relationship.</p> <p>The proposals are currently being consulted upon and the closing date for comment is 1st September 2006.</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) – posts details of the Gay Pride Week events on its website and supplies brochures through its networked tourist information services. NITB also deliver diversity training for staff which includes sexual orientation issues. The Board also plans to commission research on the make up of the tourism market in NI and this will include LGB tourists.</p>		

CORE MEMBERS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION FORUM

The Sexual Orientation Forum is a strategic forum convened to work in partnership with the OFMDFM Gender Equality Unit to develop a sexual orientation strategy and action plan, and to monitor its implementation.

Core members of Sexual Orientation Forum

Cara Friend

Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO),

Dykes with Babes

Gay and Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland (GLYNI)

Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative (LASI)

Lesbian Line

Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA)

Queerspace

The Rainbow Project

The Shout Project

EQUALITY ASSESSMENT

This draft strategy and action plan sets out a policy framework of goals, objectives and the actions to address the key issues in promoting equality of opportunity for LGB people. Each of the policies and actions chosen by departments and their agencies to deliver on the objectives of this draft strategy and action plan will be screened for their impact on equality of opportunity between the nine equality categories, and a full equality impact assessment carried out where appropriate.

In developing and finalising this draft strategy and action plan we have consulted and taken into account the views of LGB representatives of the voluntary and community sector.

GLOSSARY

Bisexuality - a term used to describe sexual attraction to people of both sexes.

Coming out - this term refers to people openly declaring or disclosing their sexuality.

Gay - refers to a person who is sexually attracted to people of the same sex. It is most commonly used to describe men who are attracted to other men.

Homophobia - an extreme and irrational dislike of homosexuality and homosexuals.

Heterosexuality – a term used to describe sexual attraction to people of the opposite sex.

Homosexuality - a term used to describe sexual attraction to people of the same sex.

Lesbian - a woman who is sexually attracted to other women.

LGB - a lesbian, gay or bisexual person

Sexual orientation - the term sexual orientation refers to an individual's orientation towards persons of the same sex, persons of the opposite sex, or persons of the same sex and opposite sex. The term does not just refer to lesbian, gay or bisexual people; heterosexual people are also included.

Draft Sexual Orientation Strategy response form
Organisation _____

<p>Do you agree the issues noted on pages 14 and 15 are the main issues facing LGB people? Is there any issue(s) you would add to the list?</p>	
<p>What actions would you suggest that government take to address these issues?</p>	
<p>Is the vision stated on page 16 a strong vision for LGB people? If not, what would you add to make a strong vision?</p>	
<p>Do you have any comments on the guiding principles noted on page 16 and 17?</p>	

<p>Are there any other guiding principles you would like to see in the strategy?</p>	
<p>What are your views on the strategic objectives noted on pages 17 and 18?</p>	
<p>What are your views on retaining and developing the role of the Sexual Orientation Forum? What should its future role be?</p>	
<p>How best can we consult with you/your group/community to ensure involvement in the development of this strategy and action plan?</p>	
<p>Please use this space for any other comments you may wish to make</p>	

Thank you for your comments. Please expand on any of the above in a separate page, if necessary.

Please return this form to:

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