



A Response to the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers



Contents

	Ministerial foreword	3
1	Introduction and background	5
2	Government's response to the recommendations	13
2.1	Inter-departmental & general	13
2.2	Accommodation	27
2.3	Health & social services	36
2.4	Education	42
2.5	Training & employment	57
2.6	Policing	62
2.7	Promotion of good relations	68
	Annexes	
1	Summary table of Government responses to the recommendations	75
2	Consultation on the recommendations in the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group Report on Travellers	85
3	Key contact list	97
4	Equality impact	99

Ministerial foreword

“I am proud of my culture and would like the rest of society to be proud of it also. I believe that if we are treated properly and equally, the Traveller community could develop and flourish as part of our society and make a valuable contribution”

It was with these words that Rosie Mongan, a young Traveller woman, concluded her presentation to the “Into the Light” conference in Belfast in 1999¹.

These words strike a chord with me. They echo the commitment of the former Executive to develop a society in which all citizens can fully and freely participate and where equality, human rights, mutual trust and respect are core values and citizens are able to realise their full potential and live free from poverty.

I am acutely aware of the disadvantages that many Travellers face in their daily lives; and the impact these have. The Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers² highlighted these difficulties and set out detailed recommendations for addressing them in their report. These recommendations were subsequently issued for consultation.

1 **Into the Light Conference Report, Commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland, Belfast, 1999.** The conference was held in Belfast on February 25th 1999.

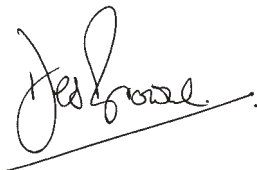
2 The Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 recognises Irish Travellers as a racial group. It defines the Irish Traveller community as *“a community of people commonly so called who are identified (by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.”*

Ministerial foreword

This document outlines the Government's response to these recommendations. All Government Departments will work together on implementing the response within the context of our Race Equality Strategy. Officials will work together and with Traveller representatives to ensure that we fulfil the commitments made in the response. We encourage Travellers to play a full part in this process.

I am grateful to everyone who has contributed to this work – to members of the PSI Working Group, to Traveller Movement (NI) for advising on the consultation with Travellers and for facilitating it and to Paul Connolly and Michaela Keenan for undertaking the Traveller consultation. In particular, I thank all the many Travellers, individuals and organisations that contributed views as part of the consultation.

I look forward to seeing this response fully implemented, and to the difference it will make to Travellers and to the community as a whole.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Des Browne', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Des Browne

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
in the Northern Ireland Office

1

Introduction and background

The position of travellers

The evidence of the inequalities and disadvantages faced by some Travellers is stark.

Travellers endure some of the worst living conditions in Northern Ireland, with high levels of overcrowding or unsuitable accommodation, which lacks basic amenities. Poor living conditions and high levels of hereditary disease all contribute to poor health. Overall, the life expectancy of Travellers is around 20 years less than that of the settled community³ while infant mortality rates are three times higher than the general population⁴. Socio-economic factors, such as long-term unemployment, educational difficulties and poor living conditions, have contributed to Travellers experiencing significantly poorer levels of health than the majority settled community here.

Many adult Travellers find it difficult to read and write. Few young Travellers stay in education much beyond primary school. Low levels of education, together with the decline of the Traveller economy have contributed to high levels of worklessness and poverty.

Tensions can arise between Traveller and settled communities. This is often based on a lack of appreciation and sensitivity by one community to the needs and preferences of the other. Of 1,150 people who participated in a

³ Belfast Travellers Education & Development Group (1999) Development Plan 1999 - 2005

⁴ North & West Belfast Health Action Zone 1999.

1

Introduction and background

representative survey, the majority said they were not willing to accept Travellers as residents in their local area (57%), as colleagues at work (66%), as close friends (70%) or as relatives by marriage (77%)⁵. Travellers themselves cite prejudice as a factor which limits their participation in education, employment and in accessing services.

Irish Travellers and race legislation

The Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 recognises Irish Travellers as a racial group. It defines the Irish Traveller community as "*a community of people commonly so called who are identified (by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.*"

The Order made it unlawful to discriminate, either directly or indirectly on racial grounds in the areas of employment and training; education; the provision of goods, facilities or services; the disposal and management of premises and advertisements. It also placed a statutory duty on district councils to make appropriate arrangements with a view to ensuring that its various functions are carried out with due regard to the need:

- (a) to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
- and

⁵ Racial Attitudes and Prejudice in Northern Ireland (Connolly & Keenan) - NISRA 2000

1

Introduction and background

- (b) to promote equality of opportunity, and good relations, between persons of different racial groups.

As a racial group, Travellers also come within the scope of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This requires Departments and other public authorities (including designated United Kingdom Departments operating in Northern Ireland and district councils) in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different racial group. It also requires Departments and other public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Travellers will be afforded protection against discrimination by the Race Discrimination Directive of June 2000. The Directive provides for a comprehensive set of anti-discrimination measures to apply across Europe. It gives a guaranteed minimum standard of legal protection for individuals against discrimination and harassment on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin and ensuring a right of redress. The scope of the Directive is broad and extends to the fields of: employment and vocational training; social protection and advantages; as well as goods, facilities and services which are available to the public, including housing and education. The Directive

1

Introduction and background

also permits member states to maintain or introduce specific positive action measures to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked to racial or ethnic origin.

Member states of the European Union (including the United Kingdom) must implement the Directive by July 2003. Work is underway within Government in Northern Ireland to implement the Directive's anti-discrimination obligations, and we are currently consulting on how best to bring forward regulations.

The Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group Report on Travellers

In recognition of the particularly severe disadvantages encountered by members of the Traveller community, Government set up a working group under the Promoting Social Inclusion element of the New Targeting Social Need policy specifically to make recommendations for action to improve the quality of life of Travellers.

The working group produced a comprehensive report⁶ which made 33 detailed recommendations to Government aimed at improving the lives of Travellers in areas such as health, education and accommodation.

Before it took decisions about how it should respond to the recommendations, Government

⁶ Consultation on the Final Report of the PSI Working Group on Travellers, Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Belfast, 2000.

1

Introduction and background

decided that it was important to consult upon them. In particular, we wanted to know the views of Travellers themselves. Information about how Travellers and others were consulted and the outcomes of the consultations are set out at Annex 2.

The Government's response

This document sets out Government's response to each of the working group's recommendations. These take full account of the views expressed in the consultation, of available evidence and of the wider policy environment. A specific response is given to each recommendation in the working group's report. It sets out the action being taken, or to be taken, by Government and, where appropriate, the timetable for this action. It also identifies which body has lead responsibility for the action.

The Government's response acknowledges the multiple and often inter-connected nature of the problems which Travellers face.

What have we done already?

In addition to the legislation set out above, Departments, agencies, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and other statutory bodies are already engaged in a wide range of activities which seek to address the inequalities and disadvantages faced by Travellers.

1

Introduction and background

The activities vary according to specific areas of departmental/statutory body responsibility. Some actions are specifically targeted at Travellers, or minority ethnic people more generally. Others are more broadly targeted but may be expected to help Travellers.

The Government's response and the Government's Race Equality Strategy

The Government's response will be implemented and the actions set out in the individual responses to the Working Group's recommendations will be taken forward as part of the Government's Race Equality Strategy. A draft of the Race Equality Strategy is being published for consultation at the same time as this response⁷. The strategic aims and principles set out in the Race Equality Strategy apply equally to the implementation of the Government's response.

Monitoring progress: The race forum and Travellers' group

The actions in the response will be included in the action plan which will be developed to implement the Race Equality Strategy. Progress on implementing the action plan, including the actions set out here will be monitored and reviewed by the race forum which is being set up in response to recommendations made by both the Promoting Social Inclusion Working

7

Race Equality Strategy Consultation Document OFMDFM February 2003 (also available at www.newtsnni.gov.uk)

1

Introduction and background

Group on Minority Ethnic People and the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers. Membership of the forum will include representatives from the statutory sector, the minority ethnic community/voluntary sector and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

The race forum will be assisted in its work by a group set up to consider issues specifically relating to Travellers. The race forum will be responsible for agreeing membership, terms of reference, chair and reporting arrangements for the Travellers' group.

The action plan will be drawn up as soon as possible after the Race Equality Strategy has been agreed. It will have input from the race forum. The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister will report annually to Ministers on the implementation of the action plan, taking account of the forum's comments.

The forum may identify further action which collectively it believes needs to be taken forward. Any recommendations it makes will be subject to the normal decision-making, budgetary and planning procedures. All recommendations will be considered and decided upon by the Minister responsible. In particular, Departmental Ministers will need to consider the likely costs of implementing any recommendations and whether these can be met from within available resources.

1

Introduction and background

Ministerial responsibility for the response

While devolved government is suspended, Des Browne, MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Northern Ireland Office, has responsibility for equality issues, including this response and the Race Equality Strategy. With his Ministerial colleagues he will have responsibility for driving forward work on implementing the response.

Ministers and Departments will keep the public well informed of major developments and achievements in implementing the response by way of Ministerial announcements, press releases and speeches – as well as through the race forum.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

2.1 Inter-departmental & general

Recommendation No. 1

An Inter-Agency Forum should be established by the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers with the responsibility of monitoring, co-ordinating and facilitating services for Travellers. The Forum should report to the First and Deputy First Ministers and also prepare progress reports for inclusion in the New TSN Annual Report demonstrating and evaluating the impact which departmental policies have made in reducing the inequalities experienced by Travellers.

The Forum should comprise representatives from relevant Government departments and agencies, non-departmental public bodies, voluntary agencies, Traveller organisations and the Traveller community. Representatives from Government departments and agencies should be of senior officer level.

The primary purpose of the Forum should be to drive forward a co-ordinated strategy aimed at tackling the legacy of inequality and disadvantage faced by Travellers and ensuring a 'level playing field' upon which all Travellers can participate fully in the social, political and economic life of the region. Within this, the specific responsibilities of the Forum should include:

- To monitor the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report;

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 1

- To facilitate joint working and the co-ordination of policies and strategies for Travellers with the aim of maximising efforts and resources within Northern Ireland and, where possible, with similar bodies in Britain and Ireland;
- To keep the effectiveness of current provision for Travellers under review and to make recommendations for the further development of policies and strategies as appropriate;
- Within the responsibilities recommended above, to give specific consideration to the promotion and co-ordination of services with regard to: children; employment; and promoting good relations between Travellers and the settled community;
- To establish a longitudinal study of Travellers with the aim of generating objective indicators of social need and monitoring the effectiveness of existing policies and strategies. A particular focus of this objective should be to provide statistical evidence of outcomes for Travellers from such policies and strategies. Part of the study should include a focus on the long-term health of Traveller children and their mothers and also infant mortality rates and morbidity rates generally, the incidence of preventable diseases and accidents rates. It should also include a focus on relations between

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 1

Travellers and the Police. The data from the study should be used as the basis to set targets for particular policy initiatives aimed at reducing levels of inequalities;

- To promote research, more generally, into the specific needs and experiences of Travellers.

Government response

The Government accepts the thrust of this recommendation.

In line with this recommendation and a similar recommendation from the PSI Working Group on Minority Ethnic People, the Government has decided to set up a Race Forum. The Race Forum's initial tasks will be to:

- help to draw up an action plan to implement the Government's Race Equality Strategy;
- monitor and review progress on the action plan;
- monitor and review progress on the implementation of the response to recommendations in the PSI Working Group on Travellers; and
- advise on issues relating to consultation of Minority Ethnic people.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Membership of the Forum will include representatives from the statutory sector, the Minority Ethnic community/voluntary sector and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. We will seek to ensure that it reflects ethnic diversity within Northern Ireland.

The Race Forum will be assisted in its work by a group set up to consider issues specifically relating to Travellers. The Traveller group's membership, terms of reference, chair and reporting arrangements will be agreed by the Race Forum. It will provide opportunities for participating organisations to work co-operatively towards the achievement of the actions set out in this response. In particular, through the Traveller group, organisations will seek to identify opportunities for co-operation, sharing and joint working, so that efforts and resources across all participating organisations can be maximised and duplication avoided.

While Departments have extensive information and research bases, we recognise that the information that we hold about Travellers is not as complete as it needs to be. There are significant gaps relating to information held about racial groups (including Travellers). The Race Forum and the Travellers' group will wish to draw attention to, and make recommendations concerning data gaps and monitoring in the context of the Research and Information Strategy which was issued for consultation on 19th December 2002.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

We would also expect the Travellers group of the Race Forum to advise on issues relating to consultation with Travellers.

Actions and timescale

- Race Forum to agree the terms of reference, membership, chair and reporting arrangements for Traveller group by July 2003.
- Race Forum to establish Traveller group and hold the initial meeting by October 2003.

Lead Department: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Recommendation No. 2

Funding for voluntary organisations catering specifically for the needs of ethnic minority people, including Travellers, should be considered in the context of the PSI Working Group on Ethnic Minorities.

Government response

The Government has accepted and acted on this recommendation. The recommendation has been taken forward within the PSI Working Group on Minority Ethnic People.

In 2001, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister established a fund in

2

Government's response to the recommendations

support of minority ethnic groups and projects that contribute to the promotion of good relations between people of different ethnic groups⁸. Several Traveller organisations are benefiting or have already benefited from the fund.

The fund will be the subject of an independent review in 2003.

Action and timescales

The specific action proposed has been completed: a fund was set up in 2001. The fund will be reviewed in 2003.

Lead Department: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Recommendation No. 3

The Department for Social Development should provide funding to an appropriate voluntary organisation or organisations for the establishment of Traveller Support Workers. There should be at least one post created per local area where there is an established Traveller community or communities.

The Department should also provide funding for the creation of one or more Traveller trainee

⁸ Details of the scheme are set out in **Funding for Minority Ethnic Voluntary Organisations: Notes of Guidance for Applicants**, Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Belfast, 2000. Available at www.newtsnri.gov.uk or from Race Equality Branch, OFMDFM, Block E, Castle Building, Stormont, BT3 4SR.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 3

positions attached to each post. Such positions should be open to those Travellers who wish to gain the relevant skills and expertise required for them to subsequently apply for Traveller Support Worker posts when they become available.

Overall, the aim of the Traveller Support Worker posts should not be to replace or supersede existing provision and support given to Travellers but to complement such work by:

- Helping to co-ordinate and maximise efforts and resources in relation to existing services and support offered to Travellers in the local area;
- To advocate on behalf of Travellers with Government departments and agencies and other relevant bodies and organisations to ensure the adequate and appropriate provision of services for Travellers.

Within this, the key responsibilities of the Traveller Support Workers should include:

- To facilitate inter-agency working within the local area in order to maximise efforts and resources;
- To work directly with local Traveller communities and Traveller support organisations to increase their knowledge and awareness of services that are available;

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 3

- To work closely with the proposed Traveller Liaison Officers within differing Government departments and agencies (Recommendation 4) to ensure that the services they offer are adequate and appropriate to the needs of Travellers in the local area and to develop strategies to ensure greater access to and take-up of such services among Travellers;
- To support and facilitate Traveller organisations in their provision of broader community development initiatives aimed at increasing the knowledge, skills and experiences of the local Traveller community and their vision and capacity for change;
- To guide and supervise the work of the Traveller trainee(s) attached to the post.

Government response

The Government considers that this Recommendation should be addressed together with Recommendation 33 (see pages 73-74). Recommendations 3 and 33 deal respectively with addressing the community development needs of Travellers and facilitating better relations between Travellers and the settled community. These recommendations recognise the importance of tackling these issues in a local context, of the involvement of statutory bodies such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Equality Commission for Northern

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Ireland and the Traveller community working together in partnership.

While we recognise the importance of addressing community development needs of Travellers and of improving relations between Travellers and the settled community, we need to explore how this can best be accomplished. Accordingly, the Government will assist an appropriate voluntary organisation/s in the establishment of an initial pilot, which will aim to establish 2 such posts. These posts will have a specific remit to provide community development support to Travellers, a prerequisite to the establishment of good relations between Travellers and the settled community, and work to promote good relations between Travellers and others living in the same local area. These posts will be required to work closely with the Community Services Departments within local district councils. The Travellers group within the Race Forum will have the opportunity to consider the precise arrangements and to provide input.

Subject to a satisfactory review of the initial pilot, we will explore continuing funding and possible further expansion of the scheme to other areas.

Actions and timescale

By December 2003, we will have established 2 Traveller Support Worker posts as a pilot.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

By June 2005, we will undertake a review of the initial pilot.

By September 2005, we will have considered the recommendations of the review in order to determine the way forward.

Lead Department: The Department for Social Development has lead responsibility for community development issues, but the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, which has responsibility for community relations, will take responsibility for the pilot scheme.

Recommendation No. 4

All Government departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies should establish and/or identify an existing Unit, headed by a senior officer, to oversee the provision of services for Travellers within its particular area of responsibility. The unit should:

- Ensure that the needs of Travellers are named and addressed in a culturally appropriate manner in all aspects of the organisation's work;
- Set clearly defined priorities, targets and timescales in relation to plans to address the identified needs of Travellers;
- Establish comprehensive monitoring systems to provide data on the take-up and use of the

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 4

organisation's services by Travellers and on the extent to which targets and priorities set have been met;

- Include representatives from Traveller and voluntary organisations and also establish effective systems of consultation and participation with the Traveller community more generally.

All Government departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies should establish a Traveller Liaison Officer to deal with each locality where there is an established Traveller community or communities. Their responsibilities should include:

- Overseeing the day-to-day provision of services for Travellers in their local community and ensuring the implementation of policies and strategies decided by the proposed unit established within the organisation;
- Liaising closely with the proposed local Traveller Support Workers (Recommendation 3) and Traveller Liaison Officers from other departments, agencies and bodies to ensure that local Traveller communities gain full access to and make use of the range of services that are offered.

All Government departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies should ensure that

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 4

all of their staff receive anti-racist training with regard to working with and meeting the needs of Travellers. Each organisation should consult with the Equality Commission on the nature and evaluation of such training and bear in mind any relevant guidelines for training it or other organisations such as the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities have produced. The outcome of this should be reported to the Inter-Agency Forum.

Such training should aim to:

- increase awareness of the cultures and lifestyles of Travellers;
- Develop an appreciation of the concepts of racism, institutional racism and sedentarism and their effects upon Travellers;
- Increase awareness of the particular needs of Travellers within the specific organisation's area of responsibility and how staff should most appropriately address these needs;
- With regard to education and schools, anti-racist training should be included within initial teacher training and also provided to allied professionals such as Advisers, Education Welfare Officers and Educational Psychologists.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Government response

The Government supports the establishment of effective systems for identifying and monitoring the needs of Travellers and evaluating the effectiveness of existing provision.

However, we are not persuaded that the model proposed in Recommendation 4 is necessarily the best way of achieving this in all cases, although certain bodies have used this sort of approach: for example within the Police Service of Northern Ireland, a sergeant in each District Command Unit has responsibility for liaison with members of minority groups and for offering support to victims of racist incidents.

While there is a need for to establish clear responsibilities and appropriate arrangements for liaison within organisations that have regular dealings with Travellers, this need not require specialist Traveller Units or dedicated Traveller liaison officers. There are a variety of different, highly effective, arrangements already in place to ensure that needs are identified and met and that there is good liaison over Travellers' issues. Precise structures and liaison with Travellers should be a matter for the management of the Department or organisation concerned. A contact list for key Government Departments and Agencies, the Northern Ireland Office and the police is included at Annex 3.

On the issue of anti-racist training, Departments have already accomplished much in the context

2

Government's response to the recommendations

of their section 75 obligations. The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, with Departments, will consider the need for further training on race issues generally and on Travellers issues in particular. The approach will be to ensure that staff participate in training which is appropriate to their needs, with those who have direct contact with the public being prioritised.

All Departments will consider the need for specialised training in communicating with and understanding the needs of traditionally marginalised groups in the context of their Equality Schemes.

Actions and timescale

All Departments to review liaison arrangements – by end 2004.

All Departments to review training needs and to consider need for further training on Travellers issues - by end 2004.

Departments to exchange examples of best practice within the context of the Race Forum on an ongoing basis.

Lead Department: All Departments. The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to co-ordinate.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

2.2 Accommodation

Recommendation No. 5

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) should undertake a comprehensive strategic needs assessment of current and projected accommodation requirements of all Travellers in consultation with Traveller organisations, members of the Traveller communities and District Councils.

The assessment should:

- Include options to allow Travellers a choice of accommodation i.e. accommodation within the settled community, group housing, serviced or transit sites;
- Reflect the accommodation needs of those Travellers who wish to travel;
- Identify the responsible statutory agency for meeting the accommodation needs of Travellers where this is not the NIHE; and
- Recommend how relationships with relevant authorities in Ireland and Britain can be established to ensure continuity of policy and service provision.

Government response

The Government has accepted the need for a comprehensive strategic needs assessment of current and projected accommodation

2

Government's response to the recommendations

requirements of all Travellers in consultation with Traveller organisations, members of the Traveller communities and district councils. This was one of the recommendations in the New Policy on Accommodation for Travellers⁹.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has carried out a comprehensive assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers, including those in settled accommodation. The assessment has determined where Travellers reside at present, the type of accommodation they are in and the type of accommodation they would prefer.

The assessment will help to determine where the greatest needs are and will play an important part in determining the type of schemes which should be provided, where they should be located and their priority. The results of the assessment were published in February 2003.

The assessment will inform an accommodation strategy for the Traveller Community in Northern Ireland.

The completion of this assessment will allow the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to draw up an accommodation strategy covering the needs of all Travellers and to develop a rolling programme of schemes to address the accommodation needs of Travellers. Schemes will then be prioritised on the basis of greatest

⁹ New Policy on Accommodation for Travellers - Department of the Environment 1999 (Available from the Department of Social Development - Brookmount Building, Belfast)

2

Government's response to the recommendations

need, developed in conjunction with relevant Traveller families and implemented at a pace dictated by the level of funding available.

Actions and timescale

The needs assessment of Travellers' accommodation needs was published on 3 February 2003.

Accommodation Strategy for Travellers to be completed by June 2003.

Lead Department: the Department for Social Development and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Recommendation No. 6

Government should, through the consultation exercise on this Report, review the New Policy on Accommodation for Travellers in relation to responsibility for provision of transit sites to determine if this should remain with District Councils or be transferred to the NIHE. The views of Travellers themselves should be particularly sought. The legislation should if necessary incorporate a mandatory requirement on the responsible agency to meet transit site needs identified by the needs assessment in recommendation 5.

Government response

The Government accepts that there should be one strategic authority with responsibility for providing

2

Government's response to the recommendations

caravan sites for Travellers and that that authority should be the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Provision has been made within draft Housing legislation for the Housing Executive to be given this responsibility and for the current responsibilities of Northern Ireland District Councils for Traveller sites to transfer to the Housing Executive. The legislation, originally introduced in the Northern Ireland Assembly, is being taken through the Westminster Parliament as an Order-in-Council.

Action and timescale

The Housing Order, is expected to be made by March 2003.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive will continue its engagement with district councils so that the practical arrangements can be put in place to allow the relevant legislation to become operative from December 2003.

Lead Department: The Department for Social Development and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Recommendation No. 7

Funding should be made available to take forward, within a defined timescale, a comprehensive programme to meet all the accommodation needs of Travellers and that responsibility for co-ordinating the funding arrangements for this should lie with the Department for Social Development.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Government response

The Department for Social Development accepts, in principle, the recommendation that funding should be made available for a comprehensive programme to meet all accommodation needs of Travellers and that the Department for Social Development should have responsibility for co-ordinating the funding arrangements.

As progress will depend on the availability of the necessary finances and given the protracted nature of that consultation and planning process, it would not be possible to set a definitive timescale.

Lead Department: The Department for Social Development.

Recommendation No. 8

The Planning Service undertakes a detailed review of the planning process as part of its Equality Scheme with regard to Traveller planning applications with the aim of identifying what practical measures can be taken to ensure that such applications are not subject to unnecessary delay and are not discriminatory.

Government response

We understand that this recommendation is based on the perception that the Planning Service tended to respond to the large number of objections to Traveller planning applications

2

Government's response to the recommendations

by triggering an Article 31 (of the Planning (NI) Order 1991), major impact assessment and public enquiry.

The volume of representations is not, in itself, valid grounds for the application of Article 31¹⁰. The criteria for the application of Article 31 are clearly set out in statute.

The Planning Service has recently carried out a public consultation on proposals for reviewing a wide range of planning processes. Comments were invited from all interested parties including all Section 75 groups. About 160 responses have been received although Traveller representatives submitted no views. This review includes the development control planning process and included specific proposals on the Article 31 process. This includes the introduction of non-statutory criteria, which if accepted would greatly reduce the number of applications designated under Article 31.

The Department has considered the best way to progress the various issues and published an Implementation Plan on 3 February 2003, which includes proposals on the Article 31 process, aimed at addressing the concerns of Travellers.

Action and timescale

The Implementation Plan has now been published.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Lead Department: The Department of the Environment.

Recommendation No. 9

With regard to the design and management of specific accommodation schemes for Travellers, it is recommended that:

- The preferences of extended family groups should be taken into account in planning who is to be accommodated in which schemes;
- Close consultation with and participation of Traveller families is needed in terms of the specific design and layout of proposed accommodation, group housing and other accommodation schemes;
- Accommodation should contain play and community facilities where needed;
- Designs should incorporate space for economic activity where required alongside living areas;
- Costs should be affordable to Travellers;
- Traveller families should be encouraged to participate in the management of their accommodation;
- The tender documents for construction for consultation and maintenance of Travellers' accommodation should include information on

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 9

the possibilities for maximizing job opportunities through local labour training and employment schemes. This would enable recruitment from the long-term unemployed of people with appropriate skills that can potentially be utilized in the construction and maintenance process.

Government response

The Government accepts the broad thrust of this recommendation.

In 1997 the Department of the Environment issued a design guide for Travellers' sites in Northern Ireland¹¹. This guide referred to the need for consultation with Travellers on site design. It also lays down that aspects such as the number of pitches, provision of open space, play areas, work space and community facilities should be considered at the design brief stage.

In December 2000 the Government committed itself to spending £6.2m over the three year period 2001/02 to 2003/04 to develop four pilot group housing schemes. These schemes are a new concept in Traveller accommodation here and provide "bricks and mortar" accommodation for extended Traveller family groups. Other features designed to facilitate Traveller culture such as workspaces, community house, hardstandings etc may also be provided if a need is identified.

11

Design Guide for Traveller Accommodation - Department of the Environment, Belfast 1997

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Funding for such non-housing features is normally provided from sources other than the Housing Budget.

Four pilot schemes were envisaged, 2 in Belfast (Glen Road and Monagh Road) and 2 rural schemes at Omagh (Tattykeel) and Magherafelt (Hillhead Road). The 2 rural schemes have been completed and the houses occupied. Work on the Glen Road scheme is scheduled to commence in the 2002/2003 financial year. Whilst progress on the Monagh Scheme has been slower than anticipated, the Scheme is scheduled to commence during the 2003/2004 financial year. During the planning for the pilot schemes the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, along with the Lee Hestia Association, has had ongoing consultation with the Travellers and also members of the settled community regarding the siting and design of all aspects of the schemes.

As to the recommendation for maximising job opportunities the Department for Social Development will encourage Housing Associations who are allocated Travellers' schemes to include a provision in the contract documentation whereby the contractor or contractors must apply a "Local Labour Agreement" (an established method for involving local labour in contracts).

Action and timescale

On design and management of specific accommodation schemes for Travellers,

2

Government's response to the recommendations

what is recommended here is now standard practice.

On local labour involvement, action to encourage Housing Associations to comply will be taken by July 2003.

Lead Department: The Department for Social Development.

2.3 Health and Social Services

Recommendation No. 10

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should publish a guide which offers advice and examples of good practice to those concerned with the commissioning and provision of health and social care for Travellers. The guide should cover, among other things, the principles and broad objectives to which service providers should work:

- Improve access to services for Travellers and develop any new services in a way that meets the needs of Travellers;
- Ensure that health and social care staff are aware of, and sensitive to, the needs of Travellers.

Government response

The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Good Practice Guide entitled *Racial Equality in Health* which has been developed by the

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Department in partnership with the Equality Commission, will be published and disseminated before the end of March 2003. The Guide provides information for Health and Personal Social Services (HPSS) staff regarding the particular difficulties faced by minority ethnic communities, including Travellers, and suggests strategies for providing culturally competent services.

Action and timescales

- Publish Good Practice Guidance - March 2003.
- In partnership with the Equality Commission, run a series of awareness workshops for HPSS staff in each of the four Health and Social Services Board areas - Spring and early Summer 2003.
- DHSSPS staff will be attending training on Traveller culture provided by the Belfast Travellers Education and Development Group - during March 2003.

Lead Department: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Recommendation No. 11

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should:

- Encourage, monitor and evaluate the introduction of GMS (General Medical Services) Local Development Schemes for Travellers;

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 11

- Collect data on and evaluate the processes of GP registration among Travellers. The data should be such that it provides a basis for analysing the nature and scope of the difficulties experienced and for devising strategies that can encourage the registration of Travellers;
- Monitor service agreements it has made with Boards and Trusts to see how well targets are being met and whether services provided are appropriate, acceptable and sensitive to Travellers.

Government response

The Government accepts this recommendation.

Action and timescales

Put in place systems to monitor and evaluate the introduction of GMS (General Medical Services) local development schemes for Travellers - by April 2004.

Begin the process of collecting data on and evaluating the processes of GP registration among Travellers. (The data will be such that it provides a basis for analysing the nature and scope of the difficulties experienced and for devising strategies that can encourage the registration of Travellers) - by April 2004.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Begin monitoring service agreements made with Boards and trusts to see how well targets are being met and whether services provided are appropriate, acceptable and sensitive to Travellers - by April 2004.

Lead Department: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Recommendation No. 12

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should commission regional health promotion and educational initiatives targeted at Travellers which:

- Explicitly address the specific health needs of Travellers including a particular focus on: accident prevention; women's health; child development screening; primary immunisation; and breast feeding;
- Place an emphasis on building up the confidence of Travellers in the personal and confidential nature of health and social care services;
- Offer information, advice and support aimed at facilitating Travellers' access to health and social care services;
- Include a pilot project(s) with the aim of establishing a model of Traveller participation in the promotion of health within the Traveller community.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Government response

The Government accepts and has acted on this recommendation.

In September 2001 DHSSPS commissioned a regional health promotion/education programme targeted at Travellers. Projects will be delivered in partnership with the voluntary and community sector and Traveller organisations.

In September 2001 DHSSPS commissioned a Traveller Community Healthcare Programme aimed at establishing a model of Traveller participation in the promotion of health within the Traveller community.

In addition, Health Action Zones, which foster new approaches to working in partnership are developing local strategies to improve health and reduce health inequalities. The North and West Belfast Health Action Zone Travellers Action Group have, for example, made progress against key objectives in the area of health improvements. These have included: the development of a major women's health care project; the employment and training of Travellers in childcare play; a review of the existing multi-disciplinary Travellers Healthcare Team; the development of health care programmes and the exploration of information systems which will more accurately reflect the health and social care needs of Travellers.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Action and timescale

The specific actions proposed are underway.

Lead Department: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Recommendation No. 13

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety carries out an Equality Impact Assessment on the Sure-Start initiative as required by the Northern Ireland Act 1998, section 75.

The aim would be to determine whether Travellers, as a distinct community, are being disadvantaged by the initiative's current criteria and whether there is scope for widening that criteria to benefit Traveller parents and children.

Government response

The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Sure Start EQIA was issued for consultation in May 2002 with the closing date for responses at 27 September 2002. Over 30 responses were received from a variety of interested parties and a number of those responses raised issues about the impact of Sure Start on Travellers.

Whilst not every Sure Start project would have an interface with Travellers, the Department

2

Government's response to the recommendations

nevertheless recognizes the importance of addressing their needs and has already highlighted this fact to the 4 Childcare Partnerships. Now that additional funding has been made available to expand Sure Start, the Department will be meeting during the Spring of 2003 with the Chairs of Childcare Partnerships about how best to target this money and one of the priority target groups will be Travellers.

Action and timescale

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to meet with Chairs of Childcare Partnerships about how to target additional funding - Spring 2003.

Lead Department: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

2.4 Education

Recommendation No. 14

The Department of Education should establish a targeted initiative aimed at promoting use of integrated (off-site) nursery and pre-school provision by Travellers. In addition, and where necessary, the Department of Education should also facilitate good quality on-site pre-school provision by consideration of core funding, staff training and service support. Moreover, Education and Library Boards and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools should establish linkages between on-site provision and

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 14

mainstream nursery and primary schools to help facilitate the subsequent transfer of Traveller children from these pre-school groups.

Government response

The Government supports action to improve Traveller participation in education. The Department of Education is committed to working with relevant Non Departmental Public Bodies, agencies and voluntary groups including Traveller representatives, to explore initiatives to improve Traveller children participation. The Education and Library Boards and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools support a range of initiatives to improve the education of Traveller children and their access to education.

The Pre-School Education Advisory Groups exercise a degree of flexibility when dealing with Travellers, which is not extended to the non-Traveller population - ongoing.

The Traveller Liaison Officers across the Education and Library Boards continue to promote up-take and facilitate access of Traveller children to pre-school education. In addition, the forum for the Education of Travellers' Children (NI) is currently devising guidelines for the successful transfer of Traveller children from nursery and pre-school to primary schools.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Special consideration will be given to access to pre-school education of Traveller children from a nomadic background.

Action and timescale

To initiate a specific 2/3 year drive to enhance the participation of Traveller children in integrated nursery and pre-school education, entailing:

- the ascertaining of present levels of participation by Traveller children and the associated Early Learning Centres;
- identifying potential children numbers and centres and targeting growth accordingly;
- providing Traveller parents with necessary information as to availability of provision;
- providing nursery and pre-school education centres with necessary guidance and curriculum support;
- providing Traveller parents with an associated learning programme such as DELTA (Developing Everyone's Learning and Thinking Abilities).

during the period April 2003 - April 2005.

Lead Department: The Department of Education.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 15

The Department of Education, in association with Education and Library Boards, should establish comprehensive pupil transfer records for Traveller children to facilitate a smooth transition between schools within Northern Ireland. In addition, the Department of Education should also invite educational representatives from Britain and Ireland to work together to co-ordinate school transitions for Traveller children moving between Northern Ireland and Britain and/or Ireland.

Government response

The Government recognises the desirability of ensuring a smooth transition for Traveller children between schools in Northern Ireland and between schools in Northern Ireland and Britain and the Republic of Ireland. The Department of Education will review the current pupil record transfer/tracking system in consultation with education partners within Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and Great Britain. In particular, it will examine the pupil record tracking system established by the Forum for the Education of Travellers' Children (NI) with a view to maximising its usefulness.

Action and timescale

Review of current pupil record transfer / tracking system - to commence April 2003 and to conclude April 2005.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Lead Department: The Department of Education.

Recommendation No. 16

The Department of Education should establish a pilot programme aimed at investigating and developing educational strategies and support materials for children of nomadic Traveller families. This should include detailed investigation of distance learning using ICT, 'smartcards' and outreach teaching support.

Government response

The Government accepts the need to develop educational strategies and support materials for children of nomadic Traveller families.

Action and timescale

The Department of Education will begin a feasibility study of distance learning for children of nomadic Travellers - January 2004.

Following analysis of the outcomes of this study it will explore the possibility of establishing a pilot project which may be on a cross border basis – by March 2005.

It will continue to develop guidance and support materials for both teachers and pupils – ongoing.

Lead Department: The Department of Education.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 17

The Department of Education should conduct a fundamental review of existing funding arrangements for supporting Traveller education and explore good practice in other areas such as the work of the Task Force in Ireland. This review should include the funding of education support teachers, school capitation grants, transport provision and school uniforms. In line with Recommendation 15, it should also include a consideration of the costs of funding educational support programmes for children of nomadic families.

Government response

The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Department has agreed to consider the funding needs of schools with Travellers' children in the context of the introduction of the Common Funding Formula. The consultation document on the make-up of the formula, including a factor to reflect the needs of these schools, was issued in April 2001. The Department is assessing the outcome of the consultation and after discussion with education partners will be issuing proposals for the new formula which, following delays with the legislative process, will now be implemented in April 2004.

The Department has also agreed to review the policies relating to school transport and school uniforms.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Action and timescale

Issue proposals for a new formula for common funding - to be implemented by April 2004.

Initiate a review of the Home to School Transport Policy and a review of the Department's School Uniform Policy - by March 2005.

Lead Department: The Department of Education.

Recommendation No. 18

The forthcoming Department of Education practical guidance for schools on promoting good behaviour, which will include a section on bullying, should contain specific and detailed advice on dealing with racist bullying and intimidation. Within this the Department of Education should also place an obligation on schools, as part of their school discipline responsibilities, to develop and implement anti-bullying strategies which include the monitoring of racist incidents.

Government response

The Government accepts this recommendation.

The Department of Education issued practical guidance to schools in September 2001 about ways of promoting positive behaviour. This contains detailed advice on developing an anti-bullying culture, lists racist abuse as a form of bullying and encourages schools to develop (in consultation with pupils and parents) a clearly

2

Government's response to the recommendations

enunciated anti-bullying policy defining bullying, the forms it can take and outlining the measures it will take to address any bullying incidents. This was supplemented in November 2002 by an anti-bullying good practice guide for secondary schools, compiled by Save the Children in consultation with an advisory group of education representatives. This also includes a section on racist bullying.

The Department has recently laid legislation before Parliament, which, if passed, (hopefully by April 2003) will make it mandatory for schools to have an anti-bullying policy (developed in consultation with pupils and parents) and to implement it.

All bullying should be monitored, as part of schools' anti-bullying practices, and racist bullying gauged in that context. Monitoring will be examined in the context of the response to Recommendation 22.

Lead Department: The Department of Education.

Recommendation No. 19

While ensuring that Traveller children gain access to the core elements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, the Department of Education should consider developing a more flexible post-primary curriculum in consultation with Traveller organisations, particularly for children aged 14 and above, for whom a mix of education and vocational training may be more appropriate.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 19

Within this the Department of Education should:

- Explore existing examples of good practice in and outside of Northern Ireland (including models currently used by the Youth Service);
- Commission research aimed at identifying post-primary school needs;
- On the basis of the research, establish and resource pilot projects for young Traveller children aged 14 and over which should be developed in consultation with Travellers and Traveller Support Groups and managed in partnership with the same.

Government response

The Government accepts the thrust of this recommendation.

The Department of Education will work with education providers including voluntary groups to identify and expand suitable forms of alternative education provision – to be open to all pupils aged 14+ (including Traveller children) - from January 2004.

The Department will take account of the results, due mid-2003, of research involving Traveller children in post-primary schools.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Action and timescales

Identify and expand suitable forms of alternative education provision – to be open to all pupils aged 14+ (including Traveller children) - from January 2004.

Lead Department: The Department of Education.

Recommendation No. 20

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in conjunction with the Belfast Education and Library Board and the Department of Education should develop a clear strategy and action plan to phase out St Mary's (formerly St Paul's) – the Traveller-only primary school in Belfast – over a five year period. This should include thorough consultation and practical actions with Traveller parents which address their concerns about integration, their own experiences of educational provision and their expectations for their children.

Government response

The Government does **not** accept this Recommendation.

The Government considers that it would be premature to take a decision at this stage as to the future of St Mary's Primary School and has no plans at present to phase out the school. It is successful in delivering quality education and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools is

2

Government's response to the recommendations

strongly opposed against any steps to force closure of the school, indicating that every effort is made to facilitate the requirement that children should be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents and it is presently the wishes of the Traveller parents that their children should be educated together in this school.

The Department and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools fully support the principle of the integration of Traveller children to mainstream schools. However, until the integration of the Traveller community into the general community reaches a stage where the parents of Traveller children choose to send their children to other mainstream schools, leading to the non-viability of St Mary's, the school should remain open.

Lead Department: The Department of Education.

Recommendation No. 21

The Department of Education, in association with Education and Library Boards and in collaboration with Traveller Organisations, should help facilitate the development of a family/community based learning culture among Travellers.

More specifically, this should include working in partnership with Traveller organisations and the Traveller community, the proposed Traveller Support Workers (Recommendation 3) and Traveller Liaison Officers from other relevant Departments and Agencies, particularly DHSSPS and DEL (Recommendation 4) to:

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 21

- Ensure the fullest access of Travellers to programmes such as DHSSPS's Sure-Start, potentially through a Northern Ireland wide approach, as well as Out of School hours learning and childcare initiatives through the New Opportunities Fund;
- Establish family literacy centres with access to adult education within existing Traveller communities where appropriate;
- Develop broader programmes of intervention aimed at linking such educational initiatives with training and employment programmes (e.g. Traveller education workers, classroom assistants and youth workers) and capacity-building measures more broadly within the Traveller community.

Government response

The Government accepts the thrust of the recommendation.

There is an urgent requirement to have culturally appropriate provision designed to meet the specific needs of adult Travellers, both individually and collectively. Many adult Travellers lack literacy and feel intimidated by formal situations ie FE Colleges etc. A desire has been expressed for the provision of literacy, self-development and creative classes in a non-threatening environment.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Action and timescales

Initiate a programme (as in the thrust of Recommendation 14) in geographical area(s) of identified need and demand, to enhance the participation of Travellers in: training and employment programmes relevant to the needs of the Traveller community; and, adult education with college-site links. Programme to run from September 2003 - April 2005.

Lead Department: The Department of Education.

Recommendation No. 22

Within its overall ethnic monitoring procedures, the Department of Education should collect systematic data on applications for admission and selection, school suspensions and exclusions, school attendance and educational achievement (including levels of attainment at formal Key Stages) for Traveller children. Such data should be collected and presented in a form suitable to allow the measurement of progress in relation to targets and priorities set.

Government response

The Government accepts this recommendation and considers that it should apply to all categories of children from a minority ethnic background (including Traveller children).

2

Government's response to the recommendations

The Forum for the Education of Traveller Children has already begun to gather such data in schools. A review is to commence in April 2003, and implementation of outcomes to begin by January 2004.

The Forum has initiated a five-Board collation of baseline statistics. This is being undertaken initially for the 2001/2002 school year and thereafter annually. The data pertains to specific information on each Traveller child in Northern Ireland. Areas covered are:

- Pre-School uptake
- Individual attendance percentages
- Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy
- Examination results
- End of Key Stage levels
- EOTAS (Education Other Than At School)
- After-school provision

This information should inform future provision.

As part of its overall ethnic monitoring procedures, the Department collects and analyses data on the qualifications and destinations of Traveller school leavers. Data on Travellers is now also collated in the Summary of Annual Examination Results.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

In 2002/2003 schools will electronically report the ethnicity codes for included pupils at Key Stage 3 via the Electronic Data Interchange to Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment. Individual pupil data is not recorded at Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2; therefore a project will be initiated to manually collect ethnicity data on Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils. The review is due to commence during April 2003.

Action and timescales

Review of the data collected by the Forum for the Education of Traveller Children to begin in April 2003.

Implementation of outcomes of review - by January 2004.

Begin project to collect manually, ethnicity data on Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils - April 2003.

Lead Department: The Department of Education.

Recommendation No. 23

The Department of Education should commission research into the educational needs and experiences of Traveller parents and children. Within this, the research should focus specifically on exploring all of the factors that tend to inhibit their access to education, including the admissions criteria used by schools, and the effectiveness of

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 23

actions taken to date to address these. It should also adopt a fully participatory methodology to ensure meaningful input from both Traveller parents and children.

Government response

The Government accepts this recommendation

The Department is currently funding a research project on the integration of Traveller children into mainstream post-primary schools. This research includes interviews with Traveller children and parents, covering educational needs and experiences.

Action and timescales

The draft final report of Research Project - to be submitted to the Department mid-2003.

Lead Department: The Department of Education.

2.5 Training and Employment

Recommendation No. 24

The Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment should collect baseline information on the employment and training needs and aspirations of Travellers to enable the setting of short and medium term goals. This research should be

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 24

specific initiatives with the research referred to in Recommendation 22. Organisations should be invited to participate in the design, planning and management of any Government response

Government accepts this recommendation.

The Government will accept that it should explore the impact of its employment and training projects for all categories of people protected by Section 75 of the 1998 Programme of Government (including Travellers). This will be done through a large scale Equality Impact Assessment of these projects. Department of Employment and Training is committed to the inclusion of this scope of research in its ongoing programme of information to be collected - early 2003.

The Department, in response to the Taskforce Report will be able to carry out the research to be completed during the targeted 2003/04 financial year (West Belfast, Greater Shankill, Londonderry and Strabane) during 2003/04. The Department is also developing employment initiatives for the disadvantaged in the labour market find work. Part of this process will

Recommendation No. 25

be to engage with organisations representing the views of the people in the area including Travellers. The Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment should explore and assess existing legal and employment projects for Travellers within Northern Ireland and in England and Wales. The aim is to identify development of further Traveller-

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 25

specific interventions. Travellers and Traveller organisations should be invited to participate in the design, planning and management of any such assessment.

Government response

The Government accepts that it should explore and assess existing training and employment projects for all categories afforded protection by section 75 of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act (including Travellers). This will be done through a programme of Equality Impact Assessment of these projects. Department of Employment and Learning has committed itself to this programme in its Equality Scheme.

The Department, in response to the Taskforce Report on Employability and Long-term Unemployment, will be implementing targeted initiatives in 4 areas (West Belfast, Greater Shankill, Londonderry and Strabane) during 2003/04, developing a series of client-centred interventions to help those disadvantaged in the labour market find work. Part of this process will be to engage with organisations representing the views of the people in the area including Travellers.

Action and timescale

Equality Impact Assessments to be completed by March 2004.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Following the completion of the assessments, the Department of Employment and Learning will consider the need for further Traveller specific interventions.

Lead Department: The Department of Employment and Learning.

Recommendation No. 26

The Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment along with other relevant Government Departments should consider providing resources to support existing Traveller-specific training projects within their areas of responsibility.

Government response

In line with the recommendation, the Government will consider this.

The Department of Employment and Learning is currently reviewing education provision for 16 to 19 year olds. In the light of the outcome of the review – engaging with the Department of Education as appropriate - it will consider whether there is a case for additional resources for Traveller specific training projects.

Action and timescale

Further discussions on this recommendation will take place with all relevant parties within the context of the Race Forum.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Lead Department: The Department of Employment and Learning.

Recommendation No. 27

The Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment should encourage employers to recruit more staff from the long-term unemployed, including Travellers, where possible and appropriate. In addition, the Department should also review the possibility of seeking changes to the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 to enable employers to target long-term unemployed Travellers in particular.

Government response

The Government already seeks to encourage employers to recruit more staff from the long-term unemployed, including Travellers. The Government **cannot** accept the second part of the recommendation. This would be a discriminatory legislative provision and illegal under Directive EC2000/43 (the Race Directive).

The Department through its various labour market interventions, encourages employers to recruit long term unemployed people, irrespective of community or ethnic background.

Actions and timescale

Consideration will take place within the context of the Race Forum as to how the Department of Employment and Learning's labour market

2

Government's response to the recommendations

interventions can encourage employers to recruit more staff from the long term unemployed including Travellers, where possible and appropriate.

Lead Department: The Department of Employment and Learning.

2.6 Policing

Recommendation No. 28

The Northern Ireland Office should fund a pilot scheme in the West Belfast area involving the appointment of a full-time Travellers' Legal Rights Worker. The Worker should be placed with and managed by an appropriate voluntary organisation. The key responsibilities of the Worker should include:

- To work alongside the proposed Traveller Support Workers (Recommendation 4) to raise awareness of legal rights among Travellers and to explain the procedures and the practices of the Police and the criminal justice system;
- To liaise between the Traveller community and the Police over specific incidents or matters of concern and to encourage greater co-operation between both in attempting to resolve such issues;
- To advocate on behalf of local Travellers with the Police and other agencies within the criminal justice system to ensure that the

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 28

particular issues and problems faced by the local Traveller communities are represented to them and addressed in an appropriate manner.

In addition, it is accepted that the person appointed to such a post would need to have gained specific training and expertise in respect of the law, police procedures and the criminal justice system. Initially, therefore, it is unlikely that many Travellers would be able to apply for such a post. It is therefore recommended that funding is also provided to create a trainee position for a Traveller to shadow the appointed Traveller Legal Rights Worker to gain the appropriate expertise and skills.

Government response

The Government is not convinced that the appointment of a full time Travellers Legal Rights Worker is the most effective way to build trust and confidence in the Police Service – the objective of this particular recommendation. In addition there are concerns surrounding the issues of confidentiality and data protection if the Legal Rights Worker was acting as an intermediary between a member of the Traveller community and the police where crimes are being reported and investigated.

It considers that the most effective way to build trust and confidence in the Police Service, is to

2

Government's response to the recommendations

develop existing contacts with Traveller Support Organisations and to increase and widen the scope of Police presentations to Traveller Groups to include topics such as the role, procedures and practices of the Police and Criminal Justice System, and how the law works to protect the rights of the individual with a specific focus on the rights of women and children.

The Police - in conjunction with other agencies - will also examine how direct and mutually productive relationships can be established with the Traveller community in a 'neutral' and informal environment.

To achieve this the Northern Ireland Office in co-operation with the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister will conduct discussions with all interested parties to explore options and agree a course of action acceptable to all parties.

Action and timescales

Northern Ireland Office will facilitate meetings with all interested parties, in a neutral and informal venue, to explore options and agree a course of action acceptable to all parties.

Initial discussions on this process will be taken forward within the context of the Race Forum.

Lead Department: The Northern Ireland Office.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 29

The Police should establish procedures for monitoring relations between themselves and the Traveller community. Such procedures should be agreed with the Police Ombudsman and should include:

- Monitoring and developing a more rigorous accounting procedure for the activities of Police Officers to ensure that Travellers and Traveller communities are not routinely 'over-policed' and that where Travellers wish to make complaints concerning the conduct of individual Officers, they can be easily identified;
- Monitoring complaints against the Police in respect of ethnicity and, in particular, publishing figures showing the number of complaints made, the number of informal resolutions and the outcome of formally investigated complaints by ethnic origin.

Government response

The Government accepts the thrust of this recommendation.

The Police Ombudsman currently monitors all aspects of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including ethnic origin. Every complainant receives a monitoring form for completion with a current response rate of 25%. The Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland also have an ongoing programme of outreach activities, which includes meeting with groups from ethnic,

2

Government's response to the recommendations

religious and racial minorities that addresses and monitors policing issues pertinent to such groups. This information is published quarterly on the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland web-site and disseminated to the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Policing Board. This reporting procedure is currently under ongoing review and improvement but has been extant since the inception of the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland has developed and is presently piloting an incident and crime investigating report form which includes specific details on racially motivated incidents and crimes. When fully adopted this information will be inputted into the Integrated Crime Information System which will provide a database of information on racially motivated incidents and crimes.

Action and timescales

Review of the reporting procedure - ongoing.

Pilot of incident / crime reporting form - to be completed by Autumn 2003.

Lead Agency: The Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Recommendation No. 30

The Police develop a written Code of Practice in consultation with the Police Ombudsman to be provided to all Police Officers regarding dealing with the Traveller community.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 30

Such a Code of Practice should include:

- Guidance for Officers on their use in the eviction of Travellers from traditional stopping areas;
- Dealing with Travellers who are victims of crime;
- Dealing with racial crime and racist incidents against Travellers.

Government response

The Government accepts the thrust of this recommendation.

On the issue of dealing with racial crime and racist incidents against Travellers, the Police Service of Northern Ireland has operated a racist incident monitoring scheme since 1996. In accordance with the recommendations of the Report on the Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence all racist incidents whether or not they amount to a crime are investigated. Over the last two years the police have for the first time had reports by members of the Traveller community of racist incidents, this might be taken as an indication that some Travellers at least are now prepared to engage with the police.

The Police Service, working in partnership with other agencies, is developing a revised system for recording racist crime and racist incidents. This will focus on designing a process where the

2

Government's response to the recommendations

victim can report racist incidents and crimes to a specified agency and that agency will immediately notify the Police Service.

Action and timescales

The Police Service of Northern Ireland will produce a Cultural Awareness Guide for every Police Officer on issues affecting vulnerable and minority groups including minority ethnic groups - by Autumn 2003.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland in partnership with the Equality Commission are taking the lead in progressing the implementation of an inter-agency reporting structure for racially motivated incidents and crimes through an inter-agency working group (comprising of representatives from statutory bodies, agencies and the community and voluntary sector) - by Spring 2004.

Lead Agency: The Police Service of Northern Ireland.

2.7 Promotion of good relations

Recommendation No. 31

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland should take responsibility for facilitating, co-ordinating and monitoring a broader education strategy in conjunction with Traveller organisations aimed at reducing racial prejudice and promoting good race relations in the region.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Recommendation No. 31

While including a focus on the diverse range of minority ethnic groups that exist, a particular emphasis should be placed on Travellers. With this in mind the Commission should give due regard to the current Citizen Traveller campaign launched in October 1999 and funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in the Republic of Ireland.

The Commission should consider including the following within such a strategy:

- A specific media campaign (including television and radio adverts, posters and leaflets); and
- The production of training resources for use by youth and community groups.

Response

The Recommendation is directed to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The response to recommendations 3 and 33 is also relevant here.

Following consultation with Travellers and Traveller support groups, as well as other minority ethnic groups, a PR/advertising campaign involving TV and radio was broadcast during April 2002. This campaign raised public awareness of ethnic diversity within Northern Ireland. It portrayed individual members of Minority Ethnic communities, including Travellers, in a promotional role.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

The Commission will explore, with the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and with Traveller representatives and other interested parties, within the context of the Race Equality Strategy how best to raise awareness. This will include the possible use of a media campaign to the general public about Travellers as citizens, with the aim of promoting good relations between Travellers and the settled community. Evaluation of the Citizen Traveller campaign, which was mounted in the Republic of Ireland, and of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland PR/ advertising campaign will be considered in this context.

The Commission, in partnership with Government Departments, is developing good practice guides on racial equality in health and social care; on Racial Equality for Travellers in Planning; and on racial equality in service provision, particularly in relation to the leisure, catering and licensed trade sectors.

It will take forward a broad education strategy with a particular focus on these good practice guides and on the production of training resources for use by youth and community groups. The Commission will work in partnership with Travellers, support groups, Government Departments and Agencies.

Action and timescale

Good Practice Guides on health, planning and service provision to be published – by September 2003.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

To develop a broad educational strategy including the development of training resources for use by youth and community groups – by March 2004.

The Commission to explore, with the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, within the context of the Race Equality Strategy (and in consultation with Traveller representatives) possible awareness-raising measures about Travellers as citizens – during financial year 2003-04.

Lead Agency: The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Recommendation No. 32

As a matter of priority, the Department of Education should begin to develop a multicultural/anti-racist dimension to the Northern Ireland Curriculum to be added as part of a cross-curricular theme and to be taught through all Key Stages and including a specific focus on Travellers. This should be done in consultation with Travellers and Traveller organisations. Initially, it should include:

- An extensive review of existing multicultural and anti-racist initiatives in Britain and elsewhere and the debates surrounding these;
- On the basis of this review, the development and piloting of specific resources and material for use in schools.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Government Response

The Government accepts the thrust of this recommendation.

The Department is currently considering amendments to the Northern Ireland curriculum incorporating the core concepts of citizenship as described in the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment's consultation paper for a revised curriculum and which have evolved over time for piloting arrangements. The core concepts of citizenship include.

- Diversity and Inclusion;
- Equality and Social Justice;
- Democracy and Active Participation; and
- Human Rights and Social Responsibility.

These concepts clearly have relevance for all communities including Travellers. The Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment and Education and Library Boards are working closely to further develop training and support materials for schools participating in pilot arrangements. The programme for citizenship education called 'Local and Global Citizenship' is being piloted in some 50 post-primary schools with this being the third year of the pilot. It is intended that Citizenship will form part of the statutory curriculum from September 2004 and will be implemented in schools on a phased basis.

2

Government's response to the recommendations

Action & Timescale

Citizenship to form part of the statutory curriculum - September 2004.

Implementation in schools on a phased basis thereafter.

Lead Department: The Department of Education.

Recommendation No. 33

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive should facilitate and co-ordinate specific initiatives with the objective of improving community relations between Travellers and 'settled' people in those local areas where there are Traveller communities. Such initiatives could involve the organisation and facilitation of regular meetings between Traveller representatives and local residents groups from the 'settled' community. These meetings could provide the context within which:

- The experiences and perspectives of both communities are shared;
- Specific issues and problems are discussed and resolved; and
- Trust and mutual respect are developed.

Within this, the Executive should consider the use of mediation as a particular strategy and should draw upon the experience of other relevant organisations in this area such as the Community Relations Council.

2

Government's Response to the Recommendations

Government response

See under Recommendation 3 (above).

OFMDFM has provided support to a joint initiative by the Derry Travellers Support Group (DTSG) and Belfast Travellers Education & Development Group (BTEDG). This aims to develop a model of good practice, and associated guidance, which will promote good relations between Travellers and the settled community. It is to be developed in conjunction with other Traveller organisations and is to take cognisance of any existing and/or developing models. The model is to be produced by September 2003.

The issue of relations between Travellers and the settled community should be further explored – in the light of the output of this initiative - by the Traveller group of the Race Forum with a view to addressing how these relations could be improved through for example specific initiatives/projects and the identification of best practice.

Actions and Timescales

Model of good practice and associated guidance to promote good relations between Travellers and the settled community - to be produced by Derry Travellers Support Group and Belfast Travellers Education & Development Group - by September 2003.

Summary table of responses to the recommendations

Annex 1: Summary table of responses to the recommendations				
Recommendation No.	Summary of recommendation	Action	Target for completion of action	Department responsible
1	Set up an inter-agency Travellers Forum.	<p>Inter-agency race forum to be established. Traveller group to be set up as part of race forum.</p> <p>Race forum to agree the terms of reference, membership, chair and reporting arrangements for Traveller group.</p> <p>Race forum to establish Traveller group and hold the initial meeting.</p>	<p>By July 2003.</p> <p>By October 2003.</p>	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.
2	Funding for voluntary organisations catering for ethnic minority people.	<p>The specific action proposed has been completed.</p> <p>The fund will be reviewed in 2003.</p>	Review of fund to be carried out in 2003.	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.
3	Traveller Support Workers.	<p>(see also Rec. 33).</p> <p>Establish 2 Traveller support worker posts as a pilot.</p> <p>Undertake a review of the initial pilot.</p> <p>Consider the recommendations of the review in order to determine the way forward.</p>	<p>By December 2003.</p> <p>By June 2005.</p> <p>By September 2005.</p>	Department for Social Development has lead responsibility for community development issues, but the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister will take responsibility for the pilot scheme.

A1

Summary table of responses to the recommendations

Annex 1: Summary table of responses to the recommendations				
Recommendation No.	Summary of recommendation	Action	Target for completion of action	Department responsible
4	Establishment of Traveller unit in all Depts. & agencies. Traveller liaison officer in all Depts. and agencies. Introduction of anti racist training.	All Departments to review liaison arrangements. All Departments to review training needs and to consider need for further training on Travellers issues. Departments to exchange examples of best practice within the context of the race forum on an ongoing basis.	By end 2004. By end 2004. Ongoing.	All Departments. The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to co-ordinate.
5	Undertake an accommodation needs assessment for Travellers.	The specific action proposed has been completed. Accommodation strategy to be developed.	By June 2003.	Department for Social Development and Northern Ireland Housing Executive.
6	Review of responsibility for provision of transit sites.	Legislation to transfer responsibility for the provision of Traveller sites and to transfer existing responsibilities from district councils to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Put in place practical arrangements to allow legislation to operate.	By March 2003. By December 2003.	Department for Social Development.
7	Funding of a programme to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers.	Recommendation accepted in principle.	Progress dependant on availability of finances.	Department for Social Development.

A1

Summary table of responses to the recommendations

Annex 1: Summary table of responses to the recommendations				
Recommendation No.	Summary of recommendation	Action	Target for completion of action	Department responsible
8	Review of the planning process with regard to Traveller applications.	Publish an implementation plan, which will include proposals on the Article 31 process aimed at addressing the concerns of Travellers.	Implementation Plan published on 3 February 2003.	Department of the Environment.
9	Recommendations regarding design & management of Traveller accommodation schemes and maximising local labour involvement.	On design and management of specific accommodation schemes for Travellers, what is recommended is now standard practice. On local labour involvement; action to encourage housing associations to comply.	Ongoing. by July 2003.	Department for Social Development.
10	Publish good practice guide for provision of health & social care to Travellers.	Good Practice Guide to be published. Run awareness workshops for HPSS staff. DHSSPS staff to attend training on Traveller culture.	March 2003. Spring / Early Summer 2003. March 2003.	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Summary table of responses to the recommendations

Annex 1: Summary table of responses to the recommendations				
Recommendation No.	Summary of recommendation	Action	Target for completion of action	Department responsible
11	Introduce monitor and evaluate GMS local development schemes and delivery of services to Travellers.	Put in place systems to monitor and evaluate the introduction of GMS (General Medical Services) local development schemes for Travellers. Begin the process of collecting data on and evaluating the processes of GP registration among Travellers. Begin monitoring service agreements made with boards and trusts to see how well targets are being met and whether services provided are appropriate, acceptable and sensitive to Travellers.	Actions to be commenced by April 2004.	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.
12	Commission regional health promotion and educational initiatives targeted at Travellers.	The specific actions proposed are underway.	Projects due for completion during 2004.	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.
13	Carry out an EQIA on the 'Sure Start' initiative.	Consideration of targeting additional Sure Start funding.	Spring 2003.	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.
14	Promote use of integrated nursery and pre school provision by Travellers.	To initiate a drive to enhance the participation of Traveller children in integrated nursery and pre school education.	April 2003 - April 2005.	Department of Education.

A1

Summary table of responses to the recommendations

Annex 1: Summary table of responses to the recommendations					
Recommendation No.	Summary of recommendation	Action	Target for completion of action	Department responsible	
15	Establish comprehensive transfer records for Traveller children.	Review of the current pupil record transfer/tracking system.	April 2003 - April 2005.	Department of Education.	
16	Investigate and develop educational strategies for Children of nomadic Traveller families.	Undertake a feasibility study of distance learning for children of nomadic Travellers. Following analysis of the outcomes of this study it will explore the possibility of establishing a pilot project which may be on a cross border basis. Continue to develop guidance and support materials for both teachers and pupils.	January 2004. By March 2005. Ongoing.	Department of Education.	
17	Conduct a review of funding arrangements for Traveller education and explore good practice elsewhere.	Issue proposals for a new common funding formula. Initiate a review of the home to school transport policy and a review of the Department's school uniform policy .	To be implemented by April 2004. By March 2005.	Department of Education.	
18	Forthcoming practical guidance on bullying should include advice on racist bullying/intimidation.	The action proposed has been completed.		Department of Education.	

A1

Summary table of responses to the recommendations

Annex 1: Summary table of responses to the recommendations					
Recommendation No.	Summary of recommendation	Action	Target for completion of action	Department responsible	
19	Consider developing - with Traveller organisations - a more flexible post primary curriculum.	Identify and expand suitable forms of alternative education provision for pupils aged 14+.	From January 2004.	Department of Education.	
20	Develop a strategy and action plan to phase out St Mary's school.	The Government does not accept this recommendation.		Department of Education.	
21	Facilitate the development of a family/community based learning culture among Travellers.	Initiate a programme to enhance participation of Travellers in training and employment programmes and adult education with college links.	September 2003 - April 2005.	Department of Education.	
22	Collect a wide range of systematic data relating to the education of Traveller children.	Review of data collected by the Forum for the Education of Traveller children. Following the review, implement any refinements. Begin project to collect manually ethnicity data on key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils.	Begins April 2003. By January 2004. April 2003.	Department of Education.	

A1

Summary table of responses to the recommendations

Annex 1: Summary table of responses to the recommendations					
Recommendation No.	Summary of recommendation	Action	Target for completion of action	Department responsible	
23	Commission research into the educational needs and experiences of Traveller parents and children.	Research has been commissioned.		Department of Education.	
24	Collect baseline information on Traveller employment & training needs and aspirations of Travellers.	Research to be commissioned.	Early 2003 .	Department of Employment and Learning.	
25	Explore and assess existing training projects for Travellers in Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, & Great Britain.	To be considered in the context of completion of equality impact assessments.	March 2004.	Department of Employment and Learning.	
26	Provide resources to support existing Traveller specific training courses.	Recommendation to be discussed within the context of the Race Forum.		Department of Employment and Learning.	

A1

Summary table of responses to the recommendations

Annex 1: Summary table of responses to the recommendations				
Recommendation No.	Summary of recommendation	Action	Target for completion of action	Department responsible
27	Encourage employers to recruit more staff from the long term unemployed including Travellers.	Recommendation to be discussed within the context of the Race Forum.		Department of Employment and Learning.
28	Pilot appointment of a full time Travellers legal rights worker in West Belfast.	NIO to facilitate discussions with all interested parties, in a neutral and informal venue, to explore options and agree a course of action acceptable to all parties.	Initial discussions to take place within context of Race Forum.	Northern Ireland Office.
29	Establish procedures to monitor relationships between Travellers & Police.	Review of reporting procedure. Pilot of incident / crime reporting form.	Ongoing. By Autumn 2003.	Northern Ireland Office.
30	Develop and issue to all officers a written code of practice on dealing with the Traveller community.	Produce a cultural awareness guide . Develop inter agency reporting structure for racially motivated incidents / crimes.	By Autumn 2003 . By Spring 2004.	Northern Ireland Office/Police Service of Northern Ireland.

A1

Summary table of responses to the recommendations

Annex 1: Summary table of responses to the recommendations				
Recommendation No.	Summary of recommendation	Action	Target for completion of action	Department responsible
31	Equality Commission of Northern Ireland to facilitate, co-ordinate and monitor a broader education strategy - in conjunction with Traveller Organisations - aimed at reducing racial prejudice and promoting good relations between Travellers and the settled community.	Good Practice Guides on health, planning and service provision to be published. To develop a broad educational strategy including the development of training resources for use by youth and community groups.	By September 2003. By March 2004.	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.
32	Develop a multicultural and anti racist dimension to the Northern Ireland curriculum.	Citizenship to form part of the statutory curriculum. Introduction in schools on a phased basis thereafter.	From September 2004.	Department of Education.

A1

Summary table of responses to the recommendations

Annex 1: Summary table of responses to the recommendations				
Recommendation No.	Summary of recommendation	Action	Target for completion of action	Department responsible
33	NIHE to facilitate and co-ordinate initiatives to improve relationships between the Traveller Community and the settled community.	See under Recommendation 3.	Recommendation 3.	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

A2

Consultation on the recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers

1 The PSI Working Group on Travellers

- 1.1 Prior to the establishment of the Northern Ireland Executive Direct Rule Ministers set up a working group to consider factors which could cause Travellers to be at risk of social exclusion and to develop an integrated strategy of policy and action to tackle them. The Working Group comprised representatives of Government Departments, statutory bodies, Traveller and other voluntary agencies and of the Traveller community.
- 1.2 The working group provided a report which set out what it believed needed to be done to improve the lives of Travellers in Northern Ireland. The report included 33 detailed recommendations on important issues like Traveller accommodation, education, training and employment and health.
- 1.3 Before deciding on the recommendations, the Northern Ireland Executive published the report for consultation in January 2001.

2 Public consultation on the working group report

- 2.1 The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister published the working group's report for consultation. The consultation document was widely distributed to organisations, which were likely to have an interest, and public

A2

Consultation on the Recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers

notices announcing the consultation were published in the three daily newspapers.

2.2 Consultees were asked:

- What they thought of the recommendations;
- How helpful the recommendations were and which were the most important;
- Who they thought should provide and look after transit sites; and
- To identify any additional recommendations they may have;

2.3 The organisations and individuals listed below at the end of this chapter contributed responses. The Race Equality Unit analysed responses on recommendations 1 - 4 and 33 respectively. Comments on the remaining recommendations were analysed by the Departments responsible.

2.4 Overall, respondents supported the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group's Report.

3 Culturally appropriate consultation with Travellers

3.1 Ministers were convinced of the need to seek the views of Travellers themselves and to do so in a culturally appropriate way.

A2

Consultation on the Recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers

- 3.2 Traveller Movement (NI) advised Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister officials on how best to consult Travellers. As a result, it was agreed that an appropriate third party should be commissioned to undertake the work. Following a competitive tendering process, Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister contracted Dr Paul Connolly and Dr Michaela Keenan of the University of Ulster to undertake the work. Traveller Movement (NI) also assisted in the process by facilitating the researchers' contact with Travellers.
- 3.3 The Consultation Steering Group was chaired by Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and included representatives of the Departments of Education, Employment and Learning, Health and Social Services and Public Safety and Social Development along with four Traveller representatives.
- 3.4 The researchers employed a survey methodology, which was carefully designed to reflect the experiences and needs of Travellers. Rather than consulting on each of the recommendations, in detail, Travellers were asked about the principles underlying the recommendations. One hundred and seventy eight Travellers were asked a series of core questions. Of these, 111 Travellers participated in the in-depth interview during which they were also asked their views and opinions on a range of more detailed issues.

A2

Consultation on the Recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers

- 3.5 The sample was judged by the researchers to be “fairly representative” in terms of age, type of accommodation and location. There was, however, an over-representation of women in the sample – which the researchers explain reflects the “greater reluctance of men to be interviewed and also their lack of availability”. In-depth interviews were conducted with seven Travellers who were nomadic and four who were working in community development posts.

4 Responses to the consultation

- 4.1 A total of 66 responses to the PSI Working Group Report were received from a wide range of groups and organisations from both the public and private sectors. Responses were received from groups involved various activities ranging from healthcare, education, local government to academic and legal institutions, public and private housing bodies and representatives of local businesses. Please see paragraph 6 in this section for a list of respondents. The vast majority of responses to the consultation acknowledged the inequalities and disadvantages suffered by Travellers and generally supported the recommendations contained in the Report. A summary of the outcome of consultation is given below.

A2

Consultation on the Recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers

4.2 Public Consultation

Inter Departmental Recommendations
(Recs 1, 2, 3 & 4)

Analysis of the responses revealed strong support for each recommendation. There was particular support for the establishment of an Inter-Agency forum (Recommendation 1).

Accommodation (Recs 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9)

Each recommendation dealing with Traveller accommodation received widespread support and there was a strong majority in favour of the proposal to transfer responsibility for transit sites from District Councils to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (Recommendation 6).

Health (Recs 10,11,12, & 13)

The majority of responses to the 4 recommendations dealing with health issues were very supportive and included suggestions on a number of issues including improvement of GP registration rates.

Education (Recs 14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22 & 23)

A wide range of organisations commented on the recommendations concentrating on education and the vast majority of comments received, fully supported the Recommendations contained in the Report.

A2

Consultation on the Recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers

Training & Employment (Recs 24,25,26 & 27)

All of the recommendations, which concentrated on Employment and Training issues, were broadly supported, particularly Recommendation 26, which called for resources to support Traveller specific training projects.

Policing & Promotion of Good Relations (Recs 28,29,30,31,32 & 33)

While the majority of comments on the policing recommendations were very positive, some respondents were of the opinion that normal policing arrangements should apply throughout Northern Ireland regardless of religion, class or ethnic origin and that no individual group receive special treatment.

The remaining recommendations, which dealt with promoting good relations between Travellers and the settled community, received widespread support.

4.3 Traveller Consultation

Consultation with the Traveller community, undertaken by Dr Paul Connolly and Dr Michaela Keenan (University of Ulster) revealed overwhelming support for the majority of recommendations contained in the Working Group report. The only recommendation lacking support was the proposal to phase out St Mary's

A2

Consultation on the Recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers

Primary School (Recommendation 20).
The conclusions of the consultation with Travellers is reproduced below;

This report has presented the findings of a detailed and comprehensive consultation exercise with Travellers on the final report of the PSI Working Group on Travellers. Each of the 33 recommendations have been assessed in turn in light of the comments and feedback received from those interviewed.

There is no doubt from the evidence presented here that Travellers in Northern Ireland would strongly welcome the Working Group's report and would overwhelmingly support the recommendations contained within it.

The only recommendation where support was currently not evident among Travellers was for the phasing out of St Mary's Primary School in Belfast (Recommendation 20). However, and as discussed in the main body of the report, the issues in this case appear to be quite complex and there was a lack of majority support for any option – whether keeping the school as it is or phasing it out.

The full results of the consultation with Travellers can be viewed at:

<http://www.newtsnni.gov.uk/travellersconsultation/index.htm>

A2

Consultation on the Recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers

4.4 The Government has carefully considered the comments submitted during the period of consultation and where possible has taken them into account when preparing this response. Unfortunately, due to the number of responses received, it will not be possible to respond on an individual basis to points raised in the consultation.

5 Ministerial Consideration

5.1 Ministers carefully considered the views expressed in both consultations before reaching their conclusions.

6 Respondents to consultation

An Tearmann Early Years Project

Antrim Borough Council

Archdiocese of Armagh

Ards Borough Council

Armagh & Dungannon Health & Social
Services Trust

Ballygelagh Village Owner's Association

Belfast City Council

Belfast City Hospital Trust

A2

Consultation on the Recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers

Belfast Institute of Further & Higher Education

Belfast Traveller Support Group

Chartered Institute of Housing

Children's Law Centre

Coleraine Borough Council

Committee on the Administration of Justice

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

Councillor D.D. Barbour

Craigavon & Banbridge Community Health &
Social Services Trust

Craigavon Travellers Support Committee

Department of Agriculture and Rural
Development

Department of Education

Department for Social Development

Derry City Council

Down District Council

Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council

A2

Consultation on the Recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers

Eastern Health & Social Services Board

Education Guidance Service for Adults

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Fermanagh District Council

Forum for the Education of Travellers Children

Health & Social Services Councils

Homefirst Community Trust

Housing Rights Service

Lee Hestia Association

Local Government Partnership of Traveller
Issues

National Board for Nursing, Midwifery & Health
Visiting for N.I.

Newry & Mourne District Council

Newry & Mourne Health & Social Services Trust

NI Assembly - Committee of the Centre

NI Assembly - Social Development Committee

North & West Belfast Health & Social Services
Trust

A2

Consultation on the Recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers

North & West Belfast Health Action Zone

North Eastern Education & Library Board

Northern Health & Social Services Board

Northern Ireland Association of Citizen's
Advice Bureaux

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust

Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation

Omagh District Council

Omi Consultancy

Police Authority for Northern Ireland

Queens University of Belfast

Rural Community Network

Rural Development Council

Save the Children

South Eastern Education & Library Board

Southern Education & Library Board

A2

Consultation on the Recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers

Southern Travellers Early Years Partnership

St Mary's Primary School, Belfast

Strabane District Council

The Businessmen of Cambane Industrial Estate

The Royal Group of Hospitals

Traveller Movement (NI)

Traveller Movement (NI) Education Sub-Group

University of Ulster

United Hospitals Trust

A3

Key contact list

Department of Education

Elaine McFeeters

Elaine.McFeeters@deni.gov.uk

Telephone: 02891 279589

Equality & Social Inclusion, Rathgael House,
Balloo Road, Bangor, BT19 7PR

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Michael Sweeney

Michael.Sweeney@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Telephone: 02890 520766

Strategic Planning, Castle Buildings,
Stormont, BT4 3SG

Equality Commission

Joe Lenaghan

j.lenaghan@equalityni.org

Telephone: 02890 500600

Equality House, Great Victoria Street,
Belfast, BT2 7BB

Department for Social Development

Liam Quinn

Liam.Quinn@dsdni.gov.uk

Telephone: 02890 251903

RDO Special Programmes Branch 3rd Floor,
Brookmount Buildings, Fountain Street,
Belfast, BT1 5EE

A3

Key contact list

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Ken Fraser

Ken.Fraser@ofmdfmni.gov.uk

Telephone: 02890 522615

Race Equality Unit, Block E, Level 3,
Castle Buildings, Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3SR

Department for Employment and Learning

Daryl Young

Daryl.young@delni.gov.uk

Telephone: 02890 257933

Central Policy Planning Branch, Adelaide House,
Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8FE

Department of the Environment

Janet Cooper

Janet.Cooper@doeni.gov.uk

Telephone: 02890 540855

Equality Unit, Room 413C, Clarence Court,
10 - 18 Adelaide St, Belfast BT2 8GB

Northern Ireland Office

Dr Jim Alford

Jim.Alford@nio.x.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 02890 527015

Central Management Unit, Northern Ireland
Office, Stormont House, Stormont, Belfast

Police Service for Northern Ireland

Superintendent Bobby Hunniford

community.involvement@psni.police.uk

Telephone: 02890 650222

Community Involvement Branch, Lisnasharragh,
42 Montgomery Road, Belfast

A4

Equality Impact

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Background

- 1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which came into force on 1st January 2000, states:

“(1) A public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;*
- b) between men and women generally;*
- c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and*
- d) between persons with dependants and persons without.*

(2) Without prejudice to its obligations above, a public authority shall, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.”

- 2 All Northern Ireland Departments, their associated agencies and other public bodies, such as District Councils, are “public

authorities” in terms of the Act, as are the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Police Service. In line with commitments in their approved Equality Schemes, all these organisations are fully committed to adhering to the principles of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 when reviewing and developing policy.

The Government’s response

- 3 This response encompasses a range of policies that are the responsibility of individual Departments and agencies. Those that existed when Departments’ Equality Schemes were developed have been screened, in accordance with criteria set out in the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland’s *Guide to the Statutory Duties*, and where appropriate, respective Departments’ Equality Schemes indicate when these will be subject to equality impact assessment.
- 4 New policies introduced in the context of this response will also be screened, and, where appropriate, Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken by the relevant Department or agency.

The response, its purpose, aims, outcomes and stakeholders

- 5 This document sets out a response to the recommendations contained in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers. It aims to promote

A4

Equality Impact

equality of opportunity and to promote good relations between Travellers and people from other ethnic backgrounds.

- 6 Its intended outcomes include better and more appropriate services for Travellers and closer partnership working between Travellers and service providers.
- 7 The principal stakeholders in relation to the response are Travellers. However, some aspects of the response impact upon people from other ethnic backgrounds; for example measures to improve relations between Travellers and the settled community are intended to have a positive influence on the attitudes of the general population.

Consideration of available data and research

- 8 Up until recently accurate and current statistics on issues relevant to Travellers have not been easy to obtain, although there have been several studies during the past decade¹². The 2001 census together with the recently published Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment in Northern Ireland 2002 does much to remedy this. However, substantial gaps in the available data remain. The response sets out the steps being taken by the Government to improve the information that is available in the context of the Cross Departmental Equality and Social Need Research and Information Strategy, which was

¹² Studies include DOE (Department of the Environment)(1993) Northern Ireland Travellers Census 1993. Belfast: DOE Irwin, G & Dunn, S. (1996) Ethnic Minorities in Northern Ireland. Coleraine: Centre for the Study of Conflict, University of Ulster.

launched for consultation on 19 December 2002¹³. This should be done without placing an undue burden on the Traveller community.

- 9 A summary of the responses to the public consultation and of the consultation with the Traveller community is given at annex 2 of this document.
- 10 The available research and the responses to the consultation make it abundantly clear that Travellers experience significant disadvantage. As Dr Paul Connolly¹⁴ puts it: "Across the range of empirical indicators relating to age, economic activity, occupational status, education, housing and health, it is clear that [Irish Travellers] are a group who are multiply disadvantaged". Compared to the general population, Travellers are subject to a range of inequalities in the fields of health, education and training and employment. Attitudes towards Travellers are significantly more negative than towards any other minority ethnic group.

Assessment of impact

- 11 On the basis of an analysis of research findings, there is evidence that the negative effects of racism, racial attitudes and social exclusion impact differentially on persons of

¹³ Cross Departmental Equality and Social Need Research and Information Strategy: A Consultation Document – copies can be viewed at www.consultationni.gov.uk/cross/

¹⁴ 'Race' and Racism in Northern Ireland: A Review of the Research Evidence by Dr Paul Connolly, May 2002.

different racial groups and particularly Irish Travellers.

- 12 The multiple disadvantages currently experienced by Travellers in Northern Ireland must be addressed. Our view is that this response should have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for Travellers in areas such as Health and Education. We also believe that, as these responses specifically address recommendations, which have been built on Section 75(2), they should promote good relations between people of different racial group (Travellers) and the majority (settled) population.
- 13 In detail we believe that there will be positive impacts in relation to a number of the Section 75 categories within the Traveller community.

Consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies

- 14 It could be argued that by having a particular positive impact on Travellers, it must have a negative (or less positive) impact on persons of other racial group or the other Section 75 groupings. However, given the evidence of the social exclusion and disadvantage experienced by Travellers, to do nothing to redress this situation is not a valid option. Any positive effect on this community is intended to reduce the disadvantage and social exclusion it experiences, i.e. to redress the imbalance. It is not intended to disadvantage any other

grouping in any way. Indeed, the Government has explicitly rejected that part of Recommendation 27, which proposes seeking changes to the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 to enable employers to target long-term unemployed Travellers in particular on the grounds that it would be a discriminatory legislative provision.

Conclusion

- 15 The document is limited to responses to the specific Recommendations made in the report of the PSI Working Group on Travellers. It is not intended to be a “strategy” for Travellers. The Government’s strategic approach to tackling the inequalities suffered by Minority Ethnic communities, including Travellers, will be set out in the Race Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland. A consultation draft of the Strategy has been published alongside this document.

