



Community Safety, Diversity and Good Relations in Belfast

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March 2007



1. Background

The Institute for Conflict Research was commissioned by the Belfast Community Safety Partnership and Belfast City Council’s Good Relations Unit to carry out a review of concerns and practices in relation to community safety within four particular ‘target groups’: sectarianism, race, sexual orientation and disability. This paper will review some of the issues arising from that research identifying the delivery bodies that address community safety across the different communities of interest in the target groups. It will also acknowledge good practice initiatives in relation to diversity and community safety and highlight gaps identified by contributors to the research.

Methodology

In addition to a desk-based review of literature, web-sites and research relating to community safety and the sectors above, interviews were conducted with key organisations and individuals from statutory agencies. These included the Equality Commission, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Office, Belfast City Council, Belfast Education and Library Board, Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Interviews were also held with Women’s Aid, Save the Children and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education. All bar three of the support organisations listed below who were contacted for the purposes of contributing to the research took part in interviews or focus groups.

Sectarianism	Disabilism	Racism	Homophobia
Mount Vernon Community Council	Royal National Institute for Deaf People	Belfast Islamic Centre	Coalition on Sexual Orientation
Interaction	Re-Think	Al Nisa	Queerspace
Belfast Interface Project	Disability Action	Northern Ireland Muslim Family Association	Gay and Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland
Intercomm	Age Concern	Belfast Jewish Community	LGBT Police Community Liaison Panel
Hazelwood Integrated College	Mencap	Multi-Cultural Resource Centre	Lesbian Line
Ashton Centre Kate Clarke	Royal National Institute of the Blind	Indian Community Centre	The Rainbow Project
Linc Resource Centre		Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities	Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative
Mediation Northern Ireland		Chinese Welfare Association	

Given the time constraints of the research period, the data, which informs the material about sectarian issues of this paper was drawn primarily from within North Belfast. This area was chosen for the number of interfaces within the area, the number of enclave communities, the legacy of sectarian violence and the fact that of the ten wards with the highest rate for recorded crime, four were in North Belfast.

A draft paper was brought to a cross-sectoral meeting on 26th March 2007 (40 invitations were issued and for attendees see Appendix 1). Participants at the seminar were given two case scenarios to guide a facilitated discussion in relation to cross sectoral working (see Appendix 3). After consideration and discussion additional comments and recommendations were made to the benefit of this final draft.

2. Reported Incidents, Supporting Evidence

The context in which crimes are being recorded is changing rapidly and this indicates both an increased willingness by some citizens to engage with the criminal justice sector and a readiness of government agencies to develop closer working relationships with the community and voluntary sector.

Based on PSNI figures for 2002-2003 the Belfast Community Safety Action Plan for 2006-2008 claims that the cost of crime to each Belfast resident is in the region of £4,049 per year. The crime rate in Belfast is 167 crimes per thousand people, which accounts for 45,301 recorded crimes throughout the city. This is more than twice the rate of overall crime for Northern Ireland of 84 crimes per 1,000 people. Twenty-nine of the fifty-two Belfast electoral wards had crime rates higher than the Northern Ireland average and eleven wards had a higher rate of overall crime than the average for the city. Data also indicates a rising trend of racist, homophobic and sectarian incidents being reported to PSNI (see appendix 2). It is also noteworthy that the incidents indicate an increase in attacks on homes and physical assault, which also suggests an increase in the gravity of the incidents.

Whether these figures reflect an increase in actual incidents, or a new confidence in systems of reporting, (including engaging with the PSNI), is debatable. What is clear is that alternative methods of reporting have been investigated to ensure the safety of those who might not otherwise have reported. To that end, the Reporting Incidents of Hate (RIOH) project was initiated and piloted in South Belfast over a six-month period from June – December 2006. This is currently being internally evaluated by the CSU. What is known at this stage is that 132 incidents were reported, and that over 75% of those were not reported through third party community organisations, but rather came directly through PSNI South Belfast District Command Unit.

Sectarian	Religion (Non Sectarian)	Race	Disability	Sexual Orientation
40	1	71	1	19

However while there appears to be an increased willingness to report incidents to PSNI from some people, others remain reluctant as barriers to engagement are still in place. For example, the response of the Royal National Institute of the Blind and the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association to the Northern Ireland Office’s Consultation on the Draft Hate Crime Order, illustrates just one of these obstacles for the target groups. They describe that those whose disabilities are related to sensory deprivation are sometimes considered unable to identify assailants and consequently the effort and resources needed to undertake a process of reporting can be considered by some to be worthless and onerous.

There is also a wish by some that addressing safety issues through restorative rather than retributive issues is preferable. As one respondent to this research said:

“It’s much better to try and connect with someone, or even to try and make friends with someone rather than to have them punished. Sometimes I have to make a call between what is a genuine safety issue and what is a perceived threat.”

Community Safety Issues

The website of the Community Safety Unit (CSU) of the Northern Ireland Office indicates that community safety means preventing, reducing and containing the social, environmental and intimidatory factors that affect people’s right to live without fear of crime and which in turn might impact on their quality of life. This includes preventative measures aimed at contributing to crime reduction and tackling anti-social behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour was the greatest community safety concern for those respondents to Belfast City Council’s Community Safety Audit 2005 (23% of respondents). Groups and gangs gathering, vandalism and graffiti and noise were perceived to be the most dominant forms of anti-social behaviour city-wide. But anti-social behaviour is a broad field covering a myriad of criminal and ‘nuisance’ activities. It is defined in the Anti Social Behaviour (NI) Order 2004 as ‘acting in a manner that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as himself’.

Anti-social behaviour was also the primary concern of those interviewed for the purposes of this paper and the activities they identified which they felt impacted most on the safety of their communities of interest are categorised here as:

- **environmental**, (vandalism, graffiti, trespassing, car crimes, bonfires, attacks public transport)
- **socially related**, (attacks on emergency services and public transport, hate crimes, alcohol and drug related incidents, intimidation from groups and gangs gathering on the street, in alleyways and at interfaces, kerb-crawling, ‘cruising’, domestic violence).
- **acquisitive crime**, (burglary, robbery, vehicle and retail theft).

A number of these offences are outlined in the Community Safety Partnership Audit of 2005 and have subsequently been considered priorities in action planning.

While anti-social behaviour is a core issue for those concerned with developing appropriate community safety strategies to support people from diverse backgrounds, it is important to acknowledge that there is no discrete community of victims and equally no discrete community of offender-perpetrators. Sometimes the lines between the two are blurred. Those who are responsible for anti-social behaviour may themselves be vulnerable and at risk due to their personal circumstances such as having drug or alcohol addiction, mental health issues and learning disabilities, being excluded from mainstream schooling or because they are demonised by working or carrying out activities in public spaces that are perceived by others to be anti-social.

To that end it is essential that community safety projects should be sensitive to social exclusion issues and developed and evaluated in a way that addresses the needs of all citizens without demonising individuals.

In Northern Ireland, Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) have been established in each District Council area. They can be seen to be playing a role in strengthening local responses to local safety issues through relational working. Some CSPs have developed projects aimed at underpinning partnership working and can be seen to be active in or well positioned to broker connections between individuals within the statutory agencies and the community and voluntary sectors.

However information held by the CSU indicates that CSP initiatives have not yet begun to concentrate working on projects that might be considered unique to the target groups or with those organisations working with people living with disabilities, or with the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities and little if any consultation has taken place with the target groups.

Some integrated work with these target groups can be found in the outreach work carried out by the PSNI through their hate incident and minority liaison officers (HIMLOs). The active involvement of uniformed PSNI in the Pride Parade was seen to be a strong symbolic message sent to both the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities specifically and more generally to the wider community. Their most recent initiative is the Hate Incident Practical Action (HIPA), which began in February 2007 and is being rolled out in joined partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive with the aim of providing personal and home security measures and packages to victims of hate crime.

The Housing Executive has a dedicated Community Safety Team, which has developed a number of crime reduction initiatives including the Lock Out Crime scheme aimed at tackling the needs of older people. The Executive has also co-ordinated the formation of the Consultative Forum on Equality which both promotes good relations, and *de facto*, community safety through a joined-up interagency and inter-community work

In relation to anti-sectarian initiatives, CSU suggests that their reduced focus on sectarian issues might be attributed to a concern about duplication given a considerable amount of work is already being carried out under the auspices of the Community Relations Council. An interview with CSU revealed that based on the criteria for applicability, they consider projects supported by Peace 2 to be *de facto* funded to be addressing sectarianism within the context of community and good relations. This strategy can be evidenced in the triennial Action Plans for A Shared Future (ASF), which makes reference to priorities of tackling the visible manifestations of sectarianism and of reclaiming shared space and shared communities.

Following the breadth of this interpretation, it might then be argued that the onus on departments to meet their commitment to the Racial Equality Strategy might also be

expected to impact on race, and ethnically led community safety initiatives being funded through CSU. This is a grey area and one where clarity is further obscured by inconsistent or lack of disaggregated data in relation to ethnicity and faith and the sparse monitoring and evaluation of any discrete community safety projects in relation to mapping and auditing safety initiatives irrespective of the target group.

In the main, most CSU funded initiatives in relation to the four target groups can be found to have focussed considerable resources specifically on the needs of migrant workers and new migrants. To some extent this might be seen to complement work that has previously been piloted by organisations working on behalf of new migrants, including the Ballymena Inter Community Forum and Animate in Dungannon who have spearheaded interpretation and translation services and social inclusion activities. CSPs for example have:

- In Antrim produced a 'welcome' DVD signposting services and amenities to those from minority ethnic communities and funding for an Ethnic Liaison Worker has been secured in a joint venture with PSNI;
- Produced leaflets, welcome packs, and booklets in Lisburn, Ards, Armagh, Craigavon and Cookstown dealing with variety of issues including domestic violence, child safety and hate crime;
- Employed ethnic liaison workers in Ballymena and Antrim;
- Run migrant workers' safety awareness days, culture and diversity forums in a number of constituencies; and
- Schools in the Lisburn area have developed competitions in relation to safety.

Other ad hoc projects have been developed with particular support coming from health trusts, sporting organisations, PSNI, Housing Executive, schools and colleges of further and higher education. Many of these are based on partnership-working with organisations from the third sector in particular from minority ethnic and faith-based organisations. In the main these tend to fall into three categories:

- Paper-based and new-media education and information outreach;
- Encounter, outreach and social activities; and
- Campaigning.

Minority ethnic communities, have in the main established good relationships with HIMLOs, finding them easy to access through forums, such as the community-led South Belfast Round Table Against Racism. As a result, there appears to be a limited amount of safety work that does not come under the auspices of the PSNI in relation to longer established minority ethnic communities including the Indian, Chinese and Jewish communities. Sections of the Muslim community commented that:

‘After 9.11 attitudes hardened. It’s not just suspicious looks and glances anymore, it is outright hostility. Women being harassed, children being verbally abused, spat at. We are always being invited to be a part of any collective working, but I have not seen any thing come out of these things that does us any good. Still we are being harassed.’

3. Local Issues, Local Solutions

In Northern Ireland, a number of strategies for promoting social inclusion are expected to impact on the broad community safety agenda. These include A Shared Future, the Racial Equality Strategy, the Anti-Poverty Strategy 'Lifetime Opportunities', the Older People's Strategy 'Ageing in an inclusive society', the expansion of Neighbourhood Renewal and the Renewing Communities Action Plan, Investing for Health, The Children's Strategy, the Family and Parenting Strategy and the Drugs & Alcohol Strategy.

In considering these overarching areas, there is some learning to be garnered from Community Safety Initiatives in Great Britain, as well as from the cross-governmental organisation the Respect Taskforce and the particular focus that places on the role intra-family activities have to play in reducing concerns in relation to community safety.

The regional focus in Great Britain on specific issues and the particular responses that are appropriate locally indicates the value to the community safety objective of providing local solutions to local issues. This can be evidenced when comparing the challenges facing those in, for example the North East of England, where £11.8 million has been spent on substance misuse and drug intervention programmes, as opposed to those in the Midlands of England, where a significant aim of multi-agency drug-related work is facilitated by a cocktail of funding sources to focus on addressing and reducing gun-related violence and gang activity in and around schools.

In Belfast, the priority problem areas are different and variable. They can also change because of the season. The problems of summer safety in relation to bonfires, parades, and reduced youth service provision in July is different to the problems of winter safety that present on long, dark nights when the city centre is full of purses containing 'Christmas money', and the limited resources in areas with poor infrastructure mean that those who are at risk feel particularly vulnerable.

Belfast is a city where the results of economic regeneration, citizen's demands and a variety of crime prevention initiatives are transforming certain areas out of recognition. In the centre and in the more affluent areas of North, South, East and West Belfast, there appears to be an increased demand for and use of communal recreational space, with some areas becoming less segregated and partitioned by sectarian differences as evidenced in changing residential and educational patterns (Shirlow, Murtagh, Byrne).

It is equally valid to say that community safety issues must be considered within a context of a city of economic and social divergence and that the dominant safety concerns for some in particular geographies are that they are vulnerable because of living and working in environment of extreme social deprivation. Safety issues and inter and intra community tensions for children and young people in deprived areas, including enclaves and on interfaces, can differ substantially from those in other areas. The rather facile and overused adage, 'one man's freedom fighter is another

man's terrorist' could be reworked to be 'one youth's playground, is another youth's dumping ground.'

Belfast remains for many primarily a place emerging from recent conflict and the legacy of violence is found painted onto gable walls demarcating territorial allegiances. Here peace lines separate one section of the community from another and can be a focal point at which young people congregate for recreational purposes and one where choices about where to shop, take part in sporting activities and which hospital you use become decisions based on perceptions of safety.

'Why would you even want to go out of your house? Look out the window, there's graffiti, there's rubbish dumped, there's burnt out cars, there's wee hoods, there's not even a tree standing. And I'm going to walk across all that till get my messages!'

The recent introduction of Community Safety Wardens to Belfast is anticipated to send out a subtle symbolic as well as an actual message in the city centre that citizens should be confident in their use of public spaces. Recent legislative changes too are beginning to impact on the increased accessibility of public spaces for those living with disabilities, whose principal safety concerns have previously been seen through a lens of social exclusion. And anecdotal evidence indicates that public policy developments within statutory organisations have increased the confidence of some gay men and women who are now more willing to be seen to be 'out and about'.

For many people there appears to be a need to address community safety issues from within a context that cuts across identity politics, providing initiatives that focus on all citizens and address the barriers to sharing space:

'All the messages that you get are negative, 'hate crime is wrong' 'don't do this, don't do that' – it's scary – they're all deterrents. We should get a message out there that increases confidence in being together. Positive things about how to support each other, how to guide a blind person across the road, that it's OK to smile at a Muslim woman who is veiled, that young people aren't going to beat you up – it's about sending out positive messages and that's how we show respect and start to take care of each other.'

One example of such a project with safety and neighbourhood support, which was developed as a local response to the need for extra care across a number of communities of interest is the 'Good Morning Ballysillan' scheme which could be considered a model of best practice. This heavily volunteer-engaged initiative provides a contact and befriending service at an inter-community and inter-faith level with regular clients principally in Ballysillan and Ardoyne. It began in 2003 with 82 clients and now has 202 clients from Protestant and Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh and new migrant communities. It began as a response to interface violence, but as demand from the community grew, its remit was quickly broadened to address callers' safety needs on a broad range of issues. Telephone operators based in a community centre connect with each of the registered clients by phone every morning (24:7) between

9am and 1pm, in the first instance to ensure they are safe and as a response to requests. The operators signpost them onward for particular service support they may require. Over the past two years, and again as a direct reaction to clients requests, they have developed additional services. Now Good Morning Ballysillan provides a home visiting and personal support for clients making hospital and doctors visits. The project is particularly valued by the older and vulnerable people living in the community and their families and provides a valuable service in addressing safety concerns throughout the year. The model's strengths have been recognised with the project being replicated elsewhere in Northern Ireland. It is of concern to service users that due to the precarious nature of its funding the project is likely to close in May and that the learning from this good practice will be lost.

‘It’s my lifeline. I know someone cares, that there’ll always be someone there for me every morning when I wake. Quite simply, I feel safe.’

4. Intervention Policies

In response to a question ‘what makes you feel safe?’ invariably versions of being accepted and respected were the responses. People questioned for the research had thought less about material or structural interventions, but more about attitudes. There are many statutory led and partnership responses to community safety which range through legislative measures, local statutory and voluntary agency responses to equality and good relations duties and social inclusion schemes aimed at non-governmental organisations and the community and voluntary sector.

Belfast Community Safety Action Plan for 2006-8 recognises the significant role that children and young people can play in taking forward the work of community safety issues, but currently there are limited projects, which are specifically designed by, or developed to be delivered by and for young people. Furthermore existing projects have limited objectives in relation to the target groups who are the subject of this research, namely gay and lesbian men and women, those living with disabilities, and those who consider community safety issues a priority in light of their faith, race or political belief.

A number of the initiatives address community safety issues more generally and are proving to be both popular and successful. While they might be criticised for their limitations and lack of specific objectives in relation to the target groups above they are varyingly supported by the target groups and include:

Neighbourhood Renewal Schemes

- + Aim to develop behavioural and attitudinal changes to some shared/public spaces
- Long term projects that can have a tendency to focus on single identity work

Award Schemes

- + Applicable for all target groups working on existing initiatives
- Provides little incentive to develop new projects

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

- + Affiliated to National Neighbourhood Watch Association
- Recently introduced and untested locally at a time of developing confidence in PSNI

Roaming Community Safety Wardens¹

- + Potential for highly visible and brokering relationship role in the formation of support networks between individuals and council departments with mandate to instigate street-based initiatives.
- Working predominantly in city centres

Detached Outreach Youth Workers

¹ The Neighbourhood Warden Report (2003:10) by RES (Research and Evaluation Service) claims Wardens salaries are recouped four-fold each year.

- + Connecting with young people who are most at risk as victims and offenders
- Reduced presence during summer and restricted resources

Acceptable behaviour contracts – Housing Executive

- + Legally binding agreements
- Contributes to behaviour modification

Training and education provision including sign language

- + Introduction and outreach to broad constituency re safety and diversity
- Requires prolonged commitment to training by user groups

Youth mentoring programmes

- + Schools-friendly providing personal skill development with outputs directly related to community safety and the curriculum
- Require established groups through which to operate

Hate Crime Forums

- + Able to support the development of effective strategies to reduce hate crimes
- Talking shops, low community participation with poor financial resources.

Family Intervention Projects

- + Addresses potential community problems from an inter-generational level
- Resource heavy and low numbers of participants

Get Home Safe Campaign,

- + Good example of broad coalition work from alcohol-related licensed traders, universities, Translink, NI Tourist Board, City Council and PSNI
- All campaigns have short-term life limits

Drop Ins and walk-in crisis centres

- + Allows for safe socialising, access to facilities and support services for those not ready for counselling
- Requires dedicated premises and trained and sustained volunteer-staff

Alley Gates

- + Tangible and visible deterrent message in relation to crime
- Focus on specific neighbourhoods

Floating support schemes

- + Can provide and extended service provision to ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence and rough sleepers.
- Limited environmental improvement

There are also established agencies, such as Mediation Northern Ireland and Victim Support who offer tailored packages of support to victims of anti-social behaviour with mediation, counselling, emotional support, information and practical help through and to support a variety of agencies including the Housing Executive.

5. Multiple Identities

Irrespective of how individuals might principally choose to define themselves, they can sometimes find particular aspects of their identity being highlighted by others and that they become targeted and subject to multiple discrimination and social exclusion across a number of grounds (Pierce 2003; Zappone 2003). Stereotyping, assumptions and discrimination occurs for many people whose identities are assumed to belong principally to a particular community of interest and are based amongst other criteria on perceptions about race, faith, sexual orientation or because people are living with a disability.

This can impact on how individuals engage with others in public, as people can find themselves worried about their safety due to internalised concerns about their identity based on experiences of intimidation and verbal abuse of physical assault, grievous or actual bodily harm or damage to property.

A recent and powerful multi-media campaign by the mental health charity Re-Think reminds us though that “not all scars are visible” and it is important to recognise that people can also be at risk of from hiding or suppressing aspects of their identity, such as a form of defence.

Single or Cross-Cutting Issues?

Combating discrimination and respecting diversity can pose particular challenges in particular for some groups for whom particular aspects of their identity might require specific consideration in relation to the design and delivery of service provision.

Consequently, community safety initiatives need to have relevance both to discrete and distinct communities of interest, but must also have relevance and bring benefit to people at the intersections of their identities.

Gender

‘It doesn’t matter whether you see me as a woman of colour, as a gay woman, as a disabled woman, as a Protestant woman, any or all of these things – because I am. But first of all, I am a woman and I’m a woman that doesn’t feel safe waiting in a dark street for a night bus, that doesn’t feel safe walking through that park on my own, that doesn’t feel safe when there are a bunch of alcoholics drinking in the entry round the back of my house.’

Lone parenting, irrespective of gender, brings with it particular challenges when addressing safety issues.

As part of the research for this project, Women’s Aid commented on the lack of research available across sectors in relation to domestic violence. Women’s Aid welcome the opportunity to look at projects specifically in relation to women, and recognise the need to address the particular needs of discrete communities of interest.

Homophobia

Issues that relate specifically to safety and feelings of safety in relation to sexual orientation are varied. Based on a number of high-profile deaths the sector is debating between itself the important issues of how public spaces should be policed and monitored, recognising the particular safety concerns that this has not exclusively to the sector but to the community at large.

Organisations working with gay men and women report an increase of service use and membership from new migrants, in particular Poles and Lithuanians, whose choice to move to Northern Ireland has been influenced by their experiences of high levels of discrimination in their countries of origin.

Other issues which are of principal concern to the gay sector and which have ramifications for wider society include self harm related to mental well-being, child protection, safe use of internet and cyber bullying.

Good Practice: The Rainbow Project has developed a set of protocols for the PSNI and other agencies when working with gay men in the Derry/Londonderry areas; their website provides guidelines in relation to physical safety and internet safety. The use of new-media including web-fora, Gaydar, text and e-mail are considered the most successful methods to reach this target group. To that end groups have suggested that support in web-design and building websites would marry appropriately community safety and good relations work with capacity building and community development objectives.

Young People's Issues

The Community Safety Audit (2005) acknowledges young people as a priority area for work. Young people can be seen to be implicated as actors in the transmission and reception of inter-generational trauma particularly in the hardening of sectarian behaviour and attitudes in interface areas which is accompanied by an increase of self-harm and suicides (Beattie et al 2006).

‘The key thing for me would be bullying in schools. Accepting bullying sends out a message that it’s alright to attack people because they’re different from you and anyone who gets that message will carry out bullying outside school, and then it’s not bullying anymore. It starts as name calling and it can end up with violence or even suicide.’

Performance arts are considered to be both appealing and a hard hitting response that address a number of community safety issues, with The ‘New Kid’ anti-bullying play by Replay theatre, ‘Chaat Maasala’ by ArtsEkta and the ‘Suicide’ play by the Samaritans always playing to capacity audiences. There is consideration to be given to the sponsorship of large public performances on City Council venues, and in particular those which can take place during the summer months.

Good Practice: The anti-bullying campaign convened by Save the Children's anti bullying forum consortium is an example of cross-sectoral and inter-agency working with pilot projects running in partnership with BELB in 5 Belfast primary schools. The forum's contribution to Anti-Bullying week (19-23 November 2007), along the theme of 'Respecting Diversity', will be to develop an 'anti bullying wall' with young people across the target sectors using street art as the medium.

Sectarianism

In all areas of community safety work, civil liberty issues as well as personal protection concerns need to be considered. The debate that surrounds the implementation of surveillance of any description is particularly heightened and contentious in relation to sectarian incidents.

Street lighting and safe passage at contested spaces is of key concern for some residents groups and interface workers and this is particularly so in areas of North Belfast where there are multiple visible and unmarked interfaces in residential areas with shared shopping, medical and statutory services provision.

Developing protocols around the collection and storage of materials for bonfire sites is welcomed and an increased input by the council in developing safe and environmentally safe practices on sites.

As confidence is being developed in the use of public spaces, the proven success of the mobile phone networks which act as a deterrent across interfaces, might also be extended beyond interfaces to shared and contested spaces.

Unattached youth workers see themselves treading a fine line clear of their roles as informal educators and not having a policing capacity. They develop relationships between honest brokers who can mediate between young people and armed groups and paramilitaries and particularly so during the summer periods when young people find themselves increasingly at risk.

“During the summer months, youth service provision closes down. It's just not there. Communities can put on wee diversionary projects, but it needs to be more sustained. How many times do we have to say 'We know the interfaces become a flashpoint for young people. We've know for years that more is needed particularly at certain times of year and that if young people are at risk, that means the wider community are at risk too. Young people can deter other people from using an area.'”

Good Practice: In advance of summer 2006, North Belfast Interface Forum ran a successful poster campaign – Think B4 U Act – through a variety of outlets (including schools) which addressed the consequences of 'recreational rioting'. People were encouraged to 'Think before you act' and being charged with riotous behaviour was put in the context of not being able to access benefits at a later stage, such as getting visas for travel.

Disability Sector

It is not clear whether the bulk of activities that result in the safety of disabled people being compromised is due to hostility or perceived vulnerability. It is noteworthy that there is no research within the disabled sector in Northern Ireland that considers community safety issues and organisations are keen to develop research agendas to pinpoint areas of which might address community safety issues.

What is evident, based on research by Mencap in three jurisdictions including Northern Ireland, is that 9 in 10 people with learning difficulties have experienced bullying or harassment: 66% of people reporting that had been bullied regularly (more than once a month) with 32% stating that bullying takes place on a daily or weekly basis and occurs when undertaking simple activities such as leaving the house, walking to work or catching a bus to the shops which in turn becoming normalized as upsetting and distressing experiences (Alcock 2000). High levels of one to one abuse are reported including reports of people being told that they should have been put down at birth, having dog excrement put through the letterbox and being threatened with having the house burnt down. One Derry/Londonderry based man reports the experience of ‘standing at the bus stop and for no reason people would come up to me and call me names, push me and kick me’ (Mencap 2000).

The myriad of community safety challenges facing those living with sensory deprivation is very different from those who are living, for example with mental health problems. It might be argued that all disabled people require specific service delivery considerations and adaptations to ensure equality of service provision and this extends to work in relation to their community safety.

Racism

Between 2004–2005 the PSNI recorded 813 racist incidents, an increase of 79.5% on the previous year. (Radford et al 2006 and for a further discussion about racism in NI see Jarman 2003, Jarman and Monaghan 2004, Holder and Khaoury 2005, NIAC 2005) Research indicates that racist incidents are most likely to occur in public places and be perpetrated by and against young people (Jarman and Monaghan 2004). Despite this, racist crime is not seen as a policing priority by people in Northern Ireland (survey data from the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB, 2004) suggests that just 2% of survey respondents in Northern Ireland as a whole place this issue among their top five policing priorities).

There was concern that large scale advertising campaigns do little to address the fears of potential victims of racist crime.

‘A campaign with a picture of a broken window and a woman with a headscarf on, or a man with a turban on peering out or something translated into Polish doesn’t make me feel any safer. It’s just scary. It may tick some advertising agency’s boxes about diversity, but that’s not about providing a safer Belfast.’

Media

In keeping with the findings of the Community Safety Audit (2005:159) the participants to this research identified the media as contributors to fear about criminal activity in relation to those most vulnerable in society. They felt that broadcast journalists and programmes makers should be encouraged to address issues around safety, in particular in relation to children and young people, mental ill health and women with a less sensationalist approach but recognised that to engage in this process was beyond the scope of the current work.

6. Ways Forward

In developing Community Safety projects across the target groups, the following issues were debated at the Community Safety Seminar.

Message

1. Should the message that is being transmitted be geared to people's perceptions, or to the reality of the situation that they find themselves in?

That is should the initiative build confidence in citizens, addressing their prejudices and perceptions by encouraging them and asking them to proactively take part in activities, visit places, engage with people they might not have thought they would feel comfortable with?

Or

Should the message be seen to alert people to the dangers of a particular situation or location?

That is advise people that they need to take precautions when undertaking or engaging with particular set of circumstances?

2. And should the message being transmitted be Soft or Hard.

That is, should the principal concern be to transmit a soft message, which encourages people to behave in a positive, pro-active way and that is shored up by a message which incentives and highlights the potential rewards of positive behaviour? This might be achieved, for example through a set of visual and imagery, which highlights the potential benefit to the environment.

Or,

Should the message be hard, transmitting a 'Don't', negative message accompanied by concomitant punishment signals like, for example, the Hate Crime is Wrong, PSNI campaign where brutal imagery is aimed at deterrence.

Medium

What are the most affective mediums to use – these could include: new media; print; activities; stand alone events; or after hours services.

Partnerships

Who are the appropriate partnerships from the public, private and community sector that might be approached to work with Belfast Community Safety Partnership?

Form

Are there particular aspects of community safety that most readily lead themselves to addressing inter-group safety concerns, such as bullying, physical attacks and access or exclusion issues?

Cross Cutting Identities

What are the aspects of shared identity, such as gender, old age, youth, that create most opportunity for joined- up working where there is most need?

“It is ... important for all parts of civic society to take responsibility for building a shared, tolerant and inclusive society. Relationships are central. There is, therefore, an onus on all of us to play a part in initiating, encouraging and developing dialogues. We need to ensure that the ‘spaces’ where we have a responsibility are really safe for everyone and they are used actively to create those conversations to build relationships.” **A Shared Future**

Responses by Participants:

Participants to the seminar were asked in the first instance to contribute their views from that of their sectoral perspective and in the second to consider how a particular community safety project might be designed to cut across all the target groups.

Community safety was seen to be of concern to all participants but not necessarily one that was currently a priority and in some instances it had not received much active consideration at all prior to this consultation.

All respondents wanted any specially designed community safety projects that might result from this consultation to be designed around the Social Issues and a number commented on the need for these to be facilitated by the communities of interest in particular if they were activities or after hours services. The limit of ‘out of hours’ service provision was particularly noted by some.

In considering which medium would be most effective for an effective message, respondents placed the suggestions in descending order as

1. Activities
- 2 (joint). Stand Alone Events
- 2 (joint). After Hours Services
3. New Media
4. Print and Billboard

And it was considered important that public space TV be used to disseminate messages and to complement other modes of information dissemination. Furthermore that any events be linked to a wider campaign.

Contributors responding on behalf of lesbian, gay and bisexual groups as well as those who had a particular interest in the well-being of children and young people more generally, were keen to advocate for community safety projects that targeted both their constituency and the general public through the use of new media. It was felt, that resourcing groups and building their capacity to take part in web design and other IT related projects would both encourage people to engage with community safety issues (both in actual and in cyber terms) and in a more creative way and one which would appeal to young people. Taking such an approach which combined service delivery and community development/capacity building it was felt would attract interest and serve to disseminate the message more widely than other mediums might.

Overwhelmingly and in both individually targeted and more general projects, young people were mentioned by all participants as being a key group with whom to engage. Schools, formal extra-curricula activities and community-based inter-generational projects were seen as appropriate forums to tackle issues such as bullying and raise awareness about respecting diversity and young people were considered to be part of any solution to addressing community safety issues in light of the fact they they were as likely to be the victims as they were the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.

Participants felt that the messages should be focus on issues of neighbourliness and humanity grounded on social issues. Messages were welcomed that were not deterrents, but rather encouragements, messages that empowered rather than victimised the target group. For example messages such as ‘If you are excluding me you are the problem’ “We need a Tolerance Day.”

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Appendix 1

Participants at Belfast City Council Community Safety Seminar at Belfast Castle, 26.3.07

Lauren McFaul – Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Colin Finn – Cara Friend

- Coalition on Sexual Orientation CoSO

Johnny Byrne – Institute for Conflict Research

Hassan Mansour – Northern Ireland Muslim Families Association

Rosemary Bannon – Northern Ireland Policing Board

Pascal McCulla – Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Terry McKeown – Interaction

Liam Maskey – Intercomm

Muhammad Al-Qaryooti- Belfast Islamic Centre

Geraldine Loughran – Save the Children

Miryam Bader – Rainbow Project

Fergus Cooper – ReThink

Clifford Duff – Ashfield Boys School

Kate Clarke – Ashton Centre

Jolena Flett – NICEM

Brendan Clarke – North Belfast Interface Network

Thomas Quigley – Royal National Institute for the Blind

Conal Devitt – Northern Ireland Office

Appendix 2. Hate Crime Figures provided by from PSNI Community Safety Branch 25.3.07

Type of Hate Crime	Incidents			Offences	
	2004/05	2005/06		2004/05	2005/06
Disability	Not recorded	70		Not recorded	38
Homophobic	196	220 (+24/12.2%)		151	148 (-3 /2%)
Faith/Religion	Not recorded	70		Not recorded	78
Sectarian	Not recorded	1701		Not recorded	1470
Racial	813	936 (+123 / 15.1%)		634	746 (+112 /17.7%)

The number in brackets **beside** figures refer to the number of incidents/offences that have occurred in Urban Region

The number in brackets **below** figures is the percentage change from previous year

		Incidents	Offences
The not yet figures	Disability	47 (27)	26 (13)
	Homophobic	151 (86)	115 (62)
	Faith/Religion	135 (57)	120 (48)
	Sectarian	16680 (982)	1183 (549)
	Racial	1015 (617)	827 (465)

year 2006/07 have been finalised.

However these the up to 18th March 07

Appendix 3

REALITIES AND PERCEPTIONS

Example 1.

A park is badly lit at night.

The electrical supply to the park has been turned off because of a local residents group's concerns about the positioning of the lights which they say shine into their homes.

Detached youth workers doing outreach with the 200 young people who use the park as a meeting place after dark think that this excuse masks the residents' real reason for complaining.

They feel residents want to deter young people from using the space because of the noise and fears about the consumption of drugs and alcohol by a minority.

The park is in a poorly resourced area close to an interface and acts as a buffer zone separating two residential areas from shops, a health centre and library. There are schools on both sides.

Brian, crossing the park alone at dusk is attacked from behind. He sustains a head injury and is robbed. There are no witnesses.

His attacker might have been opportunistic or Brian might have been targeted.

Brian is a popular boy, active in the community, but he is not sure whether or not he is known to his attacker. Brian thinks there are several factors that could have played a part in his attack: someone recently 'outed' him through graffiti at the bus stop), or maybe because he is thought of as vulnerable because he is partially sighted. Perhaps it is that his school uniform marked him off as being from a particular community. While no racist comments were made, Brian also thinks it could be because of his dark complexion. All of these features have resulted in Brian previously being bullied both in and out of school.

Example 2.

Sofia is an unemployed social worker who lives alone in a ground floor conversion in predominantly owner-occupied, sub-urban family neighbourhood in a mixed residential area. She doesn't feel confident or safe in Belfast despite the low crime rate in the places she has lived in and describes this as being 'just a feeling'. She has no family in Northern Ireland and does not know any of her neighbours. She wants to keep things that way for now because she doesn't know how long she will stay and doesn't want to build up relationships until she is more settled and understands more about life in Northern Ireland. Sofia's limited English acts as a barrier to communicating and she has chosen not to connect with any of the groups or activities set up by migrant-worker support organisations. At 55 she is much older than most of the other users. She describes herself as having a shy and reserved personality and of being a cautious person. Sofia is developing her computer skills and travels on public transport across

town specifically to go to a class because it is run in a women's centre. Each week during the summer on her return journey, the bus passes a growing bonfire site where a group of teenagers congregate. She recognises the only girl in the group as a neighbour's daughter and over a period of weeks of observing her behaviour she considers the girl to be vulnerable and at risk from the way in which she is socialising and physically interacting with the boys.