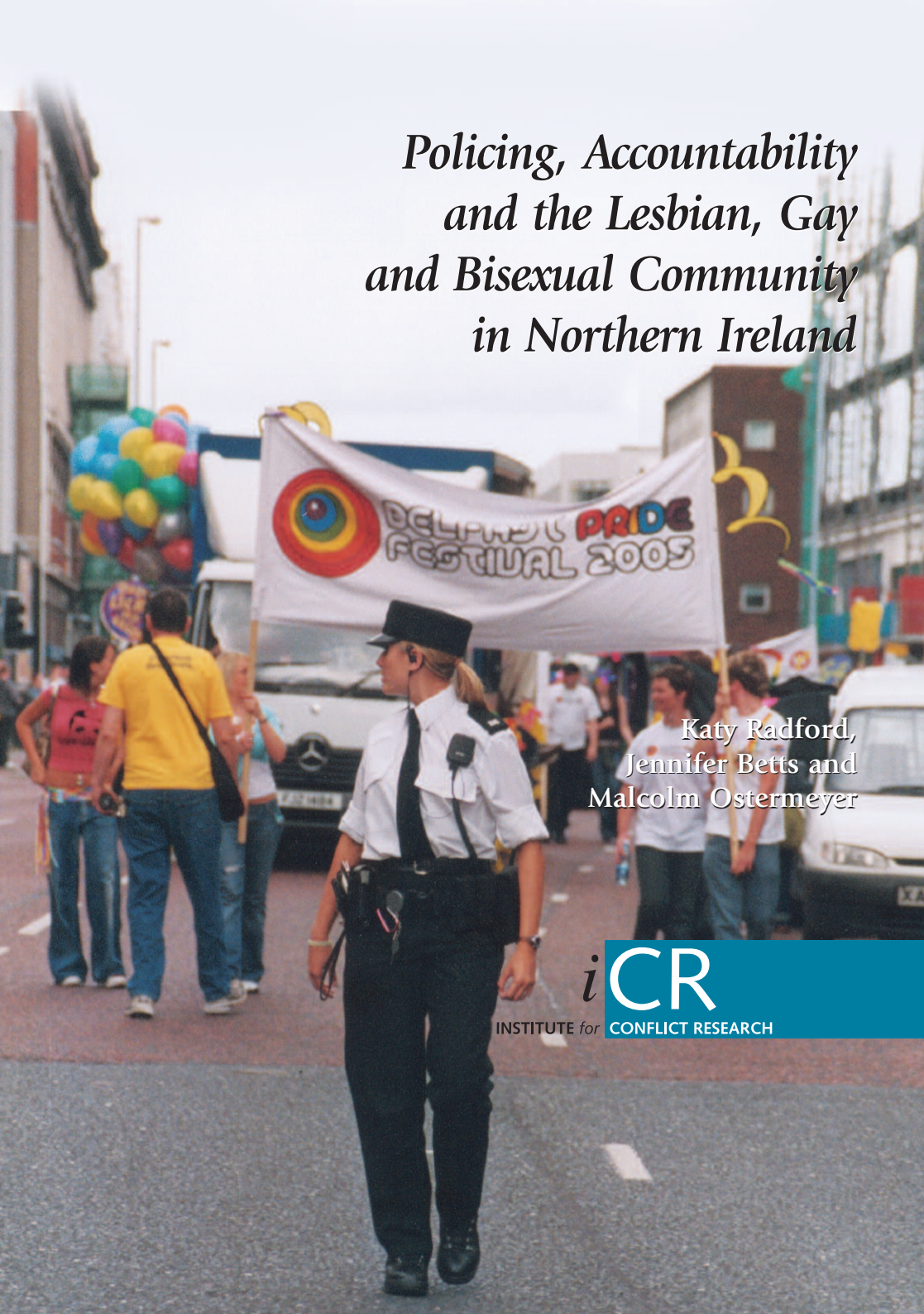




Policing, Accountability and the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community in Northern Ireland

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Malcolm Ostermeyer

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INSTITUTE for CONFLICT RESEARCH

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First Published February 2006

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ISBN 0-9552259-0-6

Produced by three creative company 028 9048 3388

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Executive Summary

The Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI) commissioned the Institute for Conflict Research to undertake research on the attitudes towards and experiences of the new policing arrangements in Northern Ireland by individuals who describe themselves as being lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). The research involved a variety of methodologies including: questionnaires (completed by 233 LGB people across Northern Ireland); focus groups (involving 90 participants) and small group interviews with LGB individuals; individual in-depth interviews with LGB people; representatives from key policing organisations and community organisations working with LGB people; participant observation of policing at pubs, clubs and gay-friendly venues; and observation at training sessions on LGB issues for serving police officers.

The main issues addressed are the LGB population's attitudes towards and knowledge of:

1. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and their experience of engaging with the PSNI;
2. The NIPB and District Policing Partnerships (DPPs); and
3. The role of OPONI and their experience of making complaints to OPONI about the PSNI.

To date little has been written on the relationship between the PSNI and members of the LGB population. However, numerous studies in other locations document the antipathy of police personnel towards homosexuality, both in principle and in practice, with officers in many countries consistently shown to exhibit hostile, negative and stereotyped views about LGB people. Whilst the PSNI acknowledges an increase in 'hate crime' incidents generally, the significant increase in reports is believed to be a combination of a rise in 'hate crime', and also an increased willingness to report incidents to the PSNI. Policing organisations are also aware of the need to address the issue of homophobic crime and are taking action to do so.

Policing – main findings

Contact with the PSNI

- 31% (72) of respondents had been the victim of a crime within the last 12 months. (19% of respondents in the NIPB module of the April 2005 Omnibus Survey had been in contact with the PSNI within the last 12 months due to being a victim of crime.)
- 58% of these respondents thought the crime was motivated by homophobia.
- 60% of respondents who had been the victim of a crime had reported the crime to the police.
- 56% of these respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received from the PSNI.
- 32% of respondents experienced problems with the police in the last year, of these 42% found the service from the PSNI unsatisfactory and 40% said a police officer had been impolite or rude.
- 25% of respondents who had experienced problems with the police felt these were due to their sexual orientation.
- Only 21% who had problems actually lodged a complaint and only 4% had complained to OPONI.
- 75% of respondents who had not complained thought nothing could be done.

The focus group findings indicated some of the issues facing the LGB community¹ are the same as those prevailing in Northern Ireland society in general and have a bearing on the attitudes of individuals toward the police regardless of their sexual orientation. In areas of Northern Ireland where there are more incidents of homophobic crime, attitudes towards the police are affected. For example, gay people in Derry Londonderry are more likely to see the need to engage with the police due to a high level of homophobic crime. This has become more important in many cases than their political affiliations. The police in the area have seized the opportunity to engage with and, along with other statutory organisations in Derry Londonderry, are building relationships between themselves and the LGB community. However, those from nationalist areas are now facing further alienation from their neighbours through their association with the PSNI.

¹ Throughout this report the term 'LGB community' is used to describe those within the general population who are lesbian, gay or bi-sexual. The authors acknowledge that not all those who are lesbian, gay or bi-sexual identify as belonging to the 'gay community' and many play no part in any gay group, organisation or 'social scene' associated with their sexual orientation.

It would appear from the focus groups that male police officers are more supportive of gay females than gay males. Where gay males said they would find it easier to talk to a female police officer, gay females reported being treated in a supportive and understanding way by male police officers, even where they felt that their sexual orientation was obvious to the officers. When females reported having had a problem with male police officers, it appeared to be around the assumption that they had a male partner, or that they felt patronised. Due to some activities engaged in by gay males that contravene norms, the police are still seen as targeting rather than protecting gay males in particular.

Many in the focus groups felt that it would build confidence in the LGB community if some LGB police officers were 'out' about their sexuality. However, some gay police officers had understandable reservations about their personal security as police officers and were reluctant to reveal their sexuality. The experience of gay police officers shows the high level of homophobia within the PSNI. This appears to be endorsed, particularly among the male hierarchy within the PSNI, who were not seen to be willing to address this issue. When an officer reported a homophobic incident, they did not feel there was support and either opted to be transferred to another station, or a transfer was used as the way to deal with the issue.

Perceptions of the PSNI

- 51% of respondents thought the PSNI were professional.
- 55% of respondents thought the PSNI were there for their protection.
- 32% of respondents thought policing had improved since the change to the PSNI.
- 38% of respondents thought the police were homophobic.
- 47% of respondents thought the police were not aware of LGB issues.
- Religion was found to be more of a factor influencing respondents' perceptions of the police than sexual orientation, age or gender, with Protestants found to be more positive about policing than Catholics, and Catholics more likely to agree that the police are homophobic and transphobic.

Joining the PSNI

- Only a quarter (24%) of respondents would consider joining the police.
- 46% of respondents would not consider joining as they felt they would not be treated well because of their sexual orientation.

NIPB – main findings

- 72% of respondents had heard of the NIPB, (compared with 82% of respondents in the NIPB module of the April 2005 Omnibus Survey.)
- Of these, 49% thought the NIPB was necessary and 36% identified that its role is to oversee policing by holding the Chief Constable to account (compared to 77% of respondents in the NIPB module of the April 2005 Omnibus Survey who thought that the NIPB's primary role is "to oversee policing and hold the Chief Constable and the PSNI publicly to account").
- Only 23% of respondents who had heard of the NIPB believed that the NIPB is homophobic, but just 16% believed that the NIPB is aware of issues relating to the LGB community.
- 81% of respondents who had heard of the NIPB thought the NIPB should have openly LGB members.

DPPs – main findings

- 48% of respondents had heard of DPPs, with Protestants and those aged over 26 more likely to have heard of DPPs. (58% of respondents in the NIPB module of the April 2005 Omnibus Survey had heard of DPPs.)
- Of respondents who had heard of DPPs, 48% said they had improved local policing (compared with 31% of respondents in the NIPB module of the April 2005 Omnibus Survey), 45% said they were necessary, 37% said they can help change policing, and 36% said they can make policing more acceptable.
- Only 24% of respondents who had heard of DPPs believed the DPPs are homophobic, but just 12% believed that the DPPs were aware of issues relating to the LGB community.
- 75% of respondents who had heard of DPPs think DPPs should have openly LGB members.

OPONI – main findings

- 83% of respondents had heard of the Police Ombudsman (compared with 86% of respondents in the OPONI module of the March 2005 Omnibus Survey).
- Respondents in focus groups said they had heard of the Police Ombudsman through the media as a result of high profile investigations.
- Only 15% of those who had heard of OPONI said they would go there to make a complaint with the highest proportion (24%) saying they would go to their local police station.

- 93% of those who had heard of OPONI were able to correctly identify its role as to investigate complaints against the police made by members of the public.
- Of those respondents who had heard of OPONI, 74% think OPONI is necessary, 47% view OPONI as being independent of the police and 44% view OPONI as impartial.
- Only 6% believed OPONI is homophobic, but just 16% believed that OPONI is aware of issues relating to the LGB community.
- Just 11 respondents had ever contacted OPONI and eight were unhappy with the service they received. In five instances, dissatisfaction was related to the slowness of the service.

Comparison of the policing organisations

- Respondents were more likely to view the PSNI as being homophobic than the NIPB, DPPs or OPONI.
- Respondents were more likely to view PSNI as being aware of LGB issues than the NIPB, DPPs or OPONI.
- OPONI received more positive responses than the NIPB or DPPs.

The LGB population indicated less awareness of the NIPB, DPPs and OPONI than the general population. Those who were aware of the roles of the different organisations showed a lack of confidence in their impartiality. This was particularly true for the NIPB and DPPs, mainly due to the political representation on these bodies.

Recommendations

The following are a series of recommendations based on the research findings:

PSNI

Reporting:

1. Victims and witnesses of homophobic incidents should be interviewed as soon as possible and within 24 hours of a homophobic crime.
2. PSNI officers investigating homophobic incidents or making follow-up visits should be sensitive to the needs of the victim. They should consider whether it is appropriate to wear uniform or whether this might lead to the 'outing' of the victim.
3. An audit and evaluation should be undertaken of current third party reporting projects within Great Britain and Ireland.
4. The name and contact details of the Minority Liaison Officer (MLO) in the local PSNI District Command Unit (DCU) should be known to all PSNI officers, particularly those on desk duty.
5. The PSNI should fully recognise the key role played by MLOs. MLOs should receive adequate support from the DCU and their colleagues in understanding and endorsing their specific role that requires them to dedicate time to their work in the building of good relations. It is recommended that where there is no local LGB support organisation, the MLO should make contact with the nearest support group rather than have no contact at all.

Training and Recruitment

6. Where possible, training on homophobia should be delivered by external accredited trainers. When training is provided by internal personnel, there is a danger that, either intentionally or unintentionally, attitudes and stereotypical assumptions will be perpetuated.
7. All PSNI desk staff and Police Exchange Operators should receive diversity training, incorporating delivery from LGB communities themselves.
8. Clear guidelines should be developed on the recording and monitoring of the sexual orientation of applicants and appointees to PSNI.

9. Clear disciplinary procedures must not only be in place, but be seen to be implemented, where homophobic attitudes are demonstrated by PSNI officers of all ranks.

PSNI Outreach work

10. The PSNI should continue to work in partnership with other statutory agencies on issues of hate crime. There is a need for more pro-active work in educating the public about all forms of 'hate crime', including homophobic 'hate crime' and bullying. There needs to be a clear and sustained message that this type of crime will not be tolerated.
11. The PSNI's outreach work in schools could involve young people designing information posters and age specific awareness raising around issues involving equality, diversity and homophobia.
12. Educational outreach work in schools should include references to the gravity of homophobic bullying of pupils on the grounds of the sexual orientation of their parents.
13. LGB PSNI officers (dependent on individual choice) should be involved in any outreach/recruitment/public relations work undertaken in the general community. Through consultation with the newly formed Gay Police Association (GPA), members can contribute to strategies for outreach/ education/public relation work.
14. Members of the PSNI's recently formed Gay Police Association (GPA) should be facilitated (dependent on individual choice) to represent the PSNI at the annual Gay Pride Parade in Belfast, as is the case with members of the Metropolitan Police in London's Gay Pride.
15. A template of how a report of a homophobic crime is processed should be developed by the PSNI and circulated among LGB organisations.
16. The PSNI has distributed personal alarms to some LGB organisations. This initiative was welcomed by members of the organisations and should be extended to all LGB organisations.

NIPB and DPPs

17. A code of conduct/terms of reference should be enshrined in the application and recruiting process for the NIPB and DPPs.
18. A means of screening/vetting should be developed for identifying homophobic attitudes and should become part of the recruitment process for the NIPB and DPPs.
19. Political parties should consider nominating LGB members to the NIPB and DPPs.

21. DPPs should automatically include a target on 'hate crime' in local policing plans, as it may not emerge as an issue in consultation with the local community.

OPONI

22. OPONI should provide diversity training for its entire staff, preferably from accredited external trainers and mechanisms for evaluating training be put in place.
23. OPONI needs to urgently address the issue of outreach work to engage with the LGB community and inform them of its role and remit.
24. OPONI needs to inform both the public and other agencies, for example Citizens Advice Bureaux, of complaint procedures and where initial complaints against PSNI can be made.

Policing organisations

25. The NIPB, PSNI and OPONI should include sexually neutral language in staff training and published material.

1. Introduction

The six-month research project was commissioned by the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI) and focused on attitudes towards and experiences of policing in Northern Ireland by individuals who describe themselves as being Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB). This included their involvement with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and their knowledge and experience of the NIPB, District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) and OPONI as victims or perpetrators of crime; as witnesses to crime; and/or as complainants about their experience of engaging with the PSNI.

The following are two accounts of the experiences individuals have had with the PSNI. These highlight both positive and negative experiences of the LGB community when engaging with the PSNI.

A youth was both physically attacked and verbally abused by an adult male when out running in an exterior public recreational space in Northern Ireland. The area is known to the police and the public as one where cruising occurs. When he presented in person at the nearest police station to report the incident, there was an assumption made by the desk officer that he had been in the area to elicit a sexual encounter and was asked "Are you normally in the habit of picking up men in (name of area)?" There was no direct follow up to this incident and he chose not to report the comments for fear of his sexual orientation becoming public.

A year later, after a high profile gay murder, two detectives in uniform visited his home. As part of their investigation, they were routinely contacting any gay/bisexual men who had reported attacks. In his absence, the officers discussed the reason for their visit with his mother. He was not 'out' to his family. No apparent consideration was given to the sensitivity or confidentiality of issues raised by the issue under discussion. His sexual orientation became an unwelcome topic of conversation in the home. He reluctantly left home, the victim of domestic violence and has since been involved in substance abuse and episodes of self-harm which have brought him to the attention once again of PSNI.

The second account is of a young gay female.

When travelling with her partner they were involved in a car accident. The police were called to the scene and gave them help and support until they were taken to the hospital. Within an hour the police provided them with all the

necessary documentation they needed in relation to the accident. "I'm sure they knew very quickly that we were partners through our interaction and did not comment on it at all. Very supportive to us."

1.1 Policing and the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual community

To date little has been written on the relationship between the PSNI and members of LGB population. However, the record of many police services in their behaviour and attitudes towards LGB individuals is poor. Numerous studies document the antipathy of police personnel towards homosexuality, both in principle and in practice, with officers in many countries consistently shown to exhibit hostile, negative and stereotyped views about LGB people (e.g. Burke, 1993, 1994; Leinen, 1993; Praat & Tuffin, 1996). It has been suggested that the occupational culture of policing helps instil negative attitudes about minority individuals (Leinen, 1993). Derbyshire (1990) suggests an assumption that gay men are a threat to public order, which has often led to the over-policing of sexual behaviour. This can be seen in the over-zealous and arbitrary application of the laws relating to gross indecency in public places (Seabrook, 1992; Valverde & Cirak, 2003). Furthermore, there is also evidence to suggest that some homophobic crime is perpetrated by police officers themselves; statistics from the USA implicate officers in a proportion – perhaps as much as a quarter - of crime of this nature (Herek, 1989; Berrill, 1991).

Both police and community groups representing LGB interests estimate that there is considerable under-reporting of crime experienced by the LGB community in the United Kingdom. A 1998 survey of 200 LGB Londoners aged between 16 and 25 found that the great majority (84%) had experienced homophobic threats or abuse and that nearly half (47%) had been physically attacked (Tatchell, 1999). However, only 19% of the victims had reported the attack to the police.

Reasons for under-reporting to the PSNI are shown in Section 4 (Table 4.2). In some instances the reasons given for non-reporting replicate findings from the 1998 London survey, indicating that the police display homophobia or hostility to victims reporting homophobic crimes. Furthermore, in keeping with a 1999 National Advisory Group study, our research indicates that common reasons for LGB people not reporting homophobic crime to the police were a perception that the incident wasn't serious enough; a perception that the police wouldn't do anything about the report; and an anticipated homophobic reaction from the police.

Other significant contributory factors to non-reporting that we highlight are also in keeping with earlier previous research and include victims' concerns about 'coming out' to the police (Mason & Palmer, 1996) and fear of retaliation or not being believed (GALOP, 1998).

Some commentators suggest that in Great Britain the LGB community is suspicious of the police, feeling unprotected by them while simultaneously feeling harassed by them (Williams and Robinson, 2004). This problem is further increased in Northern Ireland by those in the LGB community who view the police as a repressive state institution and are disinclined to support or cooperate with them (Jones & Newburn, 2001).

Police services have taken a number of steps to counteract these problems claiming that there have been significant improvements in the way they respond to homophobic crime. Many police services in Great Britain now have LGB and Transgender Liaison Officers, Community Safety Units or other 'hate crime' initiatives. Typically these include encouraging reporting; supporting victims; improving responses to violent incidents (including very serious incidents like murder); and improving community liaison (including work with schools on homophobic bullying).

In some parts of Great Britain, third party crime reporting provides the opportunity for victims of 'hate crimes' to report at locations other than police stations anonymously, 24 hours a day. In Northern Ireland, a number of similar proposals are currently under development in partnership between the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and the PSNI, who have undertaken some consultation and discussion with the community and voluntary groups working with the LGB constituency. In Derry Londonderry there is provision for reporting of homophobic incidents through the Rainbow Project and PSNI officers will take statements from victims and witnesses in the Rainbow Project office, rather than the police station. A third party reporting system has also evolved between the PSNI and three LGB groups in Belfast. While the number of reports has been small, this initiative is currently being reviewed with a view to putting in place a more formal system. However, to date there appears to be some confusion by the LGB community as to their 'ownership' of such initiatives and role in this process.

1.2 Homophobic 'hate crime' in Northern Ireland

'Hate crime', and in particular homophobic and racist attacks, in Northern Ireland have increased steadily in recent years, attaining a high media profile both locally and internationally. The Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2005-2008 defines the term 'hate crime' as encompassing *'crimes that are motivated by racism, homophobia, sectarianism, religion or a victim's disability'*. (NIPB, 2005c:1.21)

Studies conducted in Northern Ireland have consistently recorded high levels of homophobic attacks, both verbal and physical. Research by ICR (Jarman and Tenant, 2003) found that 85% of those surveyed had experienced some form of homophobic harassment, with 55% having experienced some form of homophobic violence. Quierly (2002) in the LASI survey conducted among lesbian and bisexual women found that 20% had experienced homophobic violence. The 'ShOut' research published by Youthnet (2003) among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people in Northern Ireland found that 35% of respondents had experienced physical abuse and 65% had experienced verbal abuse. A forthcoming Rainbow Project survey of gay males in Northern Ireland, to be published early in 2006, is expected to produce further evidence of the experience of homophobia in Northern Ireland.

Due to a lack of resources, LGB groups in Northern Ireland do not monitor the levels of homophobic crime experienced by their members. Consequently the only hard data available as to its extent are those recorded by the PSNI since 2000. Probable under-reporting as discussed previously throws into question the reliability of these data. Table 1.1 shows recorded homophobic incidents from 2000 to 2004. (Figures for 2004/2005 are not included due to a change in the categories used for recording). Between 2000/2001 and 2003/2004 there were on average about 50 homophobic incidents recorded by the police each year. Just under half (49%) of these incidents were allegations of physical assault, and it appears that these more serious incidents are more likely to be reported than less serious incidents such as verbal abuse and harassment, based on anecdotal evidence produced by focus groups facilitated during research for this report.

Table 1.1: Numbers and types of homophobic incidents recorded by the PSNI, 2000/2001 to 2003/2004

Type of Incident	Year				Total	
	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	Number	%
Physical assault	30	19	16	35	100	49%
Verbal abuse/ Threat	9	5	10	14	38	19%
Attack on home	7	5	5	10	27	13%
Attack on property	4	4	2	10	20	10%
Written material	1	1	0	0	2	1%
Graffiti	0	0	0	1	1	0%
Other	6	6	2	1	15	7%
Total	57	40	35	71	203	100%

PSNI statistics for 2004/2005 show the steepest rise in recorded homophobic incidents to date. The number rose from 71 in 2003/2004 to 196 in 2004/2005 (an increase of 176%). Of the 196 incidents, 151 were recorded as offences by the PSNI and over 50% of these involved physical attacks. The clearance rate for homophobic crimes to date has been lower than that for all recorded crime; of the 151 homophobic crimes recorded during 2004/2005, the clearance rate was 22.5%, compared to an overall clearance rate of 28.2% for all recorded crime.

An article in the Guardian on Monday 6th July 2005 was headed '*Gays and lesbians under siege as violence and harassment soar in Northern Ireland*'. It reported that homophobic incidents in Derry Londonderry had increased by 300% in 2004 and that campaigners say attacks are more common and brutal: *Only 27% of gay, lesbian or bisexual people in Northern Ireland feel safe walking down the street at night.* The article acknowledges that one reason for the rise in the number of recorded homophobic attacks is '*the gay community's growing confidence in reporting abuse to the police. Community groups and police are working to increase this*'.

The PSNI concur with this view and believe that the increase in reports of homophobic incidents in the Foyle area are, in part, a direct result of the proactive work undertaken by PSNI with the Rainbow Project in Derry Londonderry.

Despite the increase in 'hate crime', many people in Northern Ireland do not see homophobic crime as a policing priority. Recent survey data (NIPB, 2004b) suggests that just 1% of survey respondents placed this issue among their top five concerns; only in the Foyle and South Belfast PSNI District Command Units (DCUs)² did significantly higher proportions of respondents view this within their top five priorities (5% and 3% respectively). However, the response of LGB individuals to ICR's questionnaire used in this research is significantly different (see Section 4: Table 4.7); homophobic crime is the top priority for 111 (49%) respondents.

1.3 PSNI responses to 'hate crime'

The House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (the Committee) launched an inquiry into 'hate crime' in February 2004. The subsequent report *The Challenge of Diversity: Hate Crime in Northern Ireland*³ (the Report) published in April 2005 was based on oral and written evidence presented to the Committee during Session 2004 – 05 by interested parties in Northern Ireland. The Committee reported that:

Our inquiry has identified a lack of firm and effective leadership by the Government, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), and the criminal justice agencies in Northern Ireland to tackle these appalling crimes.

The Committee lists a number of areas where improvements must be made. Those with a direct bearing on policing policies and practices include:

- Urgent action by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and the Northern Ireland Office to improve the co-ordination of policies to counteract 'hate crime'³, publish their 'hate crime' strategies more quickly and ensure that policy work is carried through into clear improvements in the position of minority groups 'on the ground'.
- A need for the PSNI to improve its clear-up rates for homophobic and racial attacks and translate its revised 'hate crime' policy into practice quickly.

² PSNI District Command Unit (DCU) boundaries are identical to District Council boundaries with the exception of Belfast which is split into the four DCUs of East Belfast, North Belfast, South Belfast and West Belfast.

³ Currently in draft form.

- A need for the PSNI to take all necessary measures to build increasingly effective relationships with the minority communities in an effort to improve general confidence in the reporting system, address reasons for under-reporting, and encourage victims to come forward and report crimes.
- Police training to deal with homophobia must be improved and necessary steps to secure higher levels of recruitment from minority ethnic communities must be advanced.
- Local district councils' focus on sectarianism needs to be extended to encompass racism, homophobia and crimes against the disabled.
- Support and community organisations, churches, and trade unions must continue their existing efforts to provide support and advice within the communities to the victims of 'hate crime'.

Key conclusions and recommendations of the Report will be examined later in relation to policies and practices adopted by the policing organisations.

New legislation for Northern Ireland came into effect on 29th September 2004 in the shape of the *Criminal Justice (No: 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004*, enabling the courts to impose tougher sentences for offences defined as 'hate crimes'. Article 2(3) defines an offence as '*aggravated by hostility if, either at the time of the offence, immediately before or after its commission, the offender demonstrates hostility to the victim based on the victim's racial, religious or sexual orientation group, or on his/her disability*'.

Part B of the NIPB's Annual Report 2003/2004 contained a 'Report on Police Performance' and set a target for the PSNI to establish an accurate baseline of the number of crimes and incidents of a racist and homophobic nature. The PSNI established a baseline of 453 reported racist incidents and 71 reported homophobic incidents that the NIPB will continue to monitor along with the PSNI response to tackling this type of crime.

Given the recommendations by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee and the NIPB, there is an increased pressure on the PSNI to monitor and numerically evaluate its response to homophobia by the recording of incidents, crimes and clearances. It is perhaps unsurprising then that there appears to be a culture of the PSNI seeking quantifiable results, but this focus would appear to be to the detriment of advancing policies to deal with the issues.

Whilst the PSNI acknowledges an increase in 'hate crime' incidents generally, the significant increase in reports is believed to be a combination of a rise in 'hate crime', and also an increased willingness to report incidents to the PSNI. It is noteworthy that a recent PSNI 'Hate Crime is Wrong' poster campaign attempts to raise awareness of 'hate crime'. This can be seen to play some part in normalising and mainstreaming positive attitudes to differing sexual orientations. ACC Judith Gillespie, speaking on BBC Radio Ulster on Tuesday 24th May 2005, commented on the fact that there are now more incidents being brought before the courts but *'less convictions than we would like'*. She also commented on the need for *'reassurance'* in the PSNI to be better developed.

The NIPB's Director of Planning told ICR he believes that the quarterly report by the Chief Constable to the NIPB on the PSNI's performance against targets set in the Northern Ireland Policing Plan, which includes monitoring the number of racist and homophobic crimes/incidents and increasing the clearance rate for racist/homophobic crimes, *'puts 'hate crime' firmly in the spotlight'*. PSNI have had policies in place for homophobic incidents since 2000, prior to the current need for a response to recent events.

1.4 LGB officers in police services

One issue that has attracted some attention during recent years is the experience of LGB officers in police services. Burke (1992, 1994, 1995) has written extensively on the problems faced by LGB police officers, predicated on discrimination and rejection both in their personal and their professional lives. He posited a series of stages through which these officers progress in the course of rationalising their feelings about their profession and their sexual identity, going from an initial primary identity as a police officer, through a stage of a primary identity as an LGB person, and eventually arriving at an end point in which full integration of profession and lifestyle takes place. However, the attitudes of focus group respondents who are currently serving PSNI officers and support staff do not appear to support this theory. Their experiences are of a police service that mirrors the conservatism and homophobia they experience in the wider community. They consider it one where only a very few are confident enough to be 'out' about their sexual orientation to colleagues, due to a distinctly homophobic atmosphere.

In Great Britain in recent years there appears to be a greater acceptance of LGB officers serving in the police. This has been helped particularly by

the development of the Gay Police Association (GPA) which exists to work towards equal opportunities for LGB police service employees, to offer advice and support and to promote better relations between the police service and the LGB community. The GPA was formed in 1990 and has grown into a formally recognised and respected staff association with approximately 16,000 members. It is the only national organisation that specifically represents the needs and interests of LGB police staff in Great Britain. In addition to its work to support gay staff, it also works to educate the police service and central government on all issues connected with sexual orientation and policing, including policy development, the investigation of homophobic 'hate crime', victim care, and family and community liaison. During the period of this research, LGB PSNI officers and support staff who have for some years been lobbying PSNI on behalf of the GPA, were allocated a room for use as an office in the library of the PSNI Training College at Garnerville. They have an annual budget of c£2,000, IT support and an agreement that the officer carrying out administration for GPA can record the time as duty credit. Some of the experiences of LGB personnel in the PSNI are discussed in section 5 of this report.

1.5 PSNI training and recruitment

The PSNI do not carry out recruitment directly, but commission Spengler Fox, a firm of recruitment consultants, to carry out recruitment campaigns on their behalf. At the time of writing, the PSNI do not monitor the sexual orientation of their recruits. However, a letter received by ICR from the PSNI's Corporate Diversity Director suggests that it *'would be the intention of this Unit to commence the monitoring of this area for all applicants with effect from September 2005, the next recruitment competition.'*

E-mails from the PSNI Recruitment Manager indicate a rigorous advertising campaign for new recruits throughout a number of local and national media, but the specific targeting of the LGB community can only be found on a gay web-site.

Understanding that there is a need for more robust Cultural Diversity and anti-discrimination training and recruitment practices within the PSNI appears to be growing. In a presentation to the NIPB's Human Resources Committee, the Acting Director of the Northern Ireland Police College explained:

'Training on cultural issues, specific to the geographical area being policed, is as essential as training on core policing skills.' (DPP News Spring 2005, NIPB)

The 'Code of Ethics for the Police Service of Northern Ireland' published by the NIPB in 2003 states under Article 6.2 Equality:

In carrying out their duties police officers shall not discriminate on any of the following grounds, i.e. sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, disability, age, sexual orientation, property, birth or other status.

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) (NIHRC, 2004) states that if human rights training does not impact on attitudes and values, it will be of little effect. Recommendation 7 asserts:

Police training must deal with issues of police culture and subculture to ensure that what is taught in a formal setting is not off-set by the attitudes (subconscious or otherwise) of trainers or other police officers in the work situation.

This recommendation was made after NIHRC researchers found that trainers who were recruited internally within the PSNI were failing to question racist or sectarian comments and wanted to identify with rather than challenge those receiving training.

There are a number of new training initiatives being developed. This includes the development of an innovative cross border training project to be rolled out jointly by the PSNI and An Garda Síochána to provide a standardised diversity training programme throughout both services. At the time of writing the amount of time to be dedicated to specific LGB modules remains undecided.

There are a number of training packages for existing officers that draw on trainers from organisations within the LGB community. Student Officers attending the Police Training College at Garnerville participate in a new three-day training module run by Mediation NI to examine their understanding of 'community relations' and 'difference'; concepts that they will encounter in fulfilling their duties. However, researchers found there to be no training audit available that incorporated the breadth of all internal and external training in this area. Consequently there was confusion both by the PSNI's internal trainers and their external service providers as to what cultural diversity and anti-discrimination training was available and mandatory. Furthermore there was no one centralised

body developing a service-wide joined-up approach to training that provided a suitably rigorous package on sexual orientation approved by both external and internal stakeholders. However, an internal audit is currently being undertaken by the PSNI to indicate what training is being delivered and by whom.

The Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO), at one time involved in foundation training for new PSNI cadets, informed ICR that they have not been involved in PSNI training for over two years. They have, however, been invited to take part in an event for new recruits to the PSNI to talk about their work among the LGB population. CoSO point out that this does not constitute any form of training. The NIPB's Director of Planning told ICR that the NIPB considers this policy and the training of recruits as '*unparalleled...I think we've got it right for new recruits*', yet the NIPB is also cognisant of criticism and voiced reservations about existing provisions:

I think in terms of established officers, there may be an issue about training...I'm not sure about how the Diversity Unit has handled the existing officers and to my mind they're probably a more important group due to age, length of service and established views.

As part of 'A Partnership Protocol' launched by the PSNI in Foyle DCU in 2004, the Rainbow Project (a Gay and Bisexual Men's Health Project with offices in Belfast and Derry Londonderry) increased their PSNI training in the North West area. A spokesperson for Rainbow felt that the relationship was successful.

1.6 Minority Liaison Officers

Minority Liaison Officers (MLOs) provide a service across all 29 PSNI District Command Units (DCUs) in Northern Ireland. These officers were originally appointed in 1997 and specifically trained to offer support to victims of racial incidents. More recently their remit has been broadened to include other types of 'hate crime'. Following a homophobic incident the MLO will contact or visit the victim, unless contact has been declined, and provide advice and information on available support groups. The MLOs also pro-actively identify and engage with local minority groups in their DCUs. In carrying out this function, they liaise with support organisations and community groups. MLOs are 'District Resources' and therefore work to the District Commander of their DCU. Most are Community Safety Sergeants and, depending on priorities within the DCU, are involved in other safety initiatives. South Belfast DCU, with a high incidence of 'hate

crime', has appointed five additional MLOs in each of the sectors within the District.

The PSNI's Community Safety Branch is responsible for developing policy for 'hate crime'. In June 2003, the Branch developed a number of Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) to specifically consult with minority groups on the development and implementation of policy. The current IAGs are minority ethnic, older people and those with disabilities. A separate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender forum meets in Belfast along similar lines to the IAGs. The IAG members will also be available to assist police when dealing with crime or incidents involving their communities. The Branch is in the process of identifying good practice across the 29 DCUs by asking MLOs to identify local good practice, which can be circulated to all MLOs. However, one MLO interviewed said they would welcome the opportunity to meet with other MLOs to share good practice initiatives, rather than be informed by paper. The MLO suggested they would learn best how to 'reach out' to individuals with no organised groups in the area by discussion and debate with other MLOs in the same position. This is something CoSO told ICR they have been recommending to the PSNI for some time. CoSO suggest that MLOs meet with each other at least once every six months and with LGB groups in Belfast and Derry Londonderry to discuss issues on a regular basis.

Other MLOs interviewed were either not aware of an LGB community in their area or did not feel that homophobic 'hate crime' was an issue for them. Several thought that since their area was not a welcoming place for 'out' LGB people, individuals from the area tended to socialise in Belfast or Derry Londonderry and *'keep a low profile'* for the rest of the time. This lack of engagement is perhaps part of the reason for the lower level of support from LGBs for those MLOs spoken to outside Derry Londonderry.

The 'Partnership Protocol' that exists in Derry Londonderry has enabled the MLO for the area to provide effective support to the LGB community. The Rainbow Project in the City provides a 'safe space' where the constable on duty can take a statement from a victim of a homophobic attack if they do not wish to go to the police station. The MLO follows up the report with a visit to the victim's home or the Rainbow Project office, out of uniform if preferred.

When interviewed, the Foyle MLO said that as a community group in the area, Rainbow have been *'welcoming and helpful toward the PSNI and they were able to approach Rainbow for help in drawing up the local 'Partnership Protocol' to deal with homophobic incidents'*. The PSNI is working towards gaining the confidence of the local LGB community, being aware of sensitive issues such as a gay person being 'out' to some friends and family, but not necessarily at work or in other areas of their lives. Sensitivity issues became part of the 'Partnership Protocol' through discussion and input from Rainbow and the realisation that, although someone may feel able to report a crime, they still may not wish to appear in court. It is felt that this will continue to be a concern for some time, as the media are keen to report court cases in relation to homophobic crime. However, this is an issue that needs to be considered by the Public Prosecution Service rather than the PSNI. The MLO told ICR that if victims of homophobic crime have any concerns about the PSNI handling of their case they can complain to OPONI, but does not think that anyone has felt the need to do so.

1.7 Support for victims of crime

'It's about police officers going that bit extra at the time (of the incident) and explaining what Victim Support can do for them and that although the police work closely with them (Victim Support) they are independent.' (PSNI Community Safety Branch)

Victim Support is an independent charitable organisation working with victims of crime. Independent of the PSNI, they work closely with the PSNI on a system of referral. Victim Support receives core funding from the NIO through the Community Safety Unit.

The Manager of Victim Support in Lurgan said there was a consensus between how they saw their role and how the PSNI Community Safety Branch saw it in that it was important for the police officer on the scene to explain what services Victim Support could offer *'and seeing it as a part of their job'*.

The PSNI Community Safety Branch is currently writing a 'Victims Policy'. Other policies in development include Causeway, an IT project integrating all the criminal justice agencies throughout Northern Ireland. The benefits of Causeway will be to permit a prosecution to be tracked through from arrest to final disposal in the courts. This will allow the police to find out if someone, who has been accused of a serious assault, domestic incident or 'hate crime', has been released from custody. In these cases it may be important for the victim to know that the accused is not in police custody.

Other strategies include practical measures for victims of 'hate crime'. This involves simple security and safety measures in the home and these are being developed at an interagency level involving the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Community Safety Unit of the NIO.

As stated above in section 1.2, despite the continued rise in the incidence of 'hate crime' in Northern Ireland, the level of awareness of the general population has not led to it being identified as a priority policing issue by those not directly affected. However, the NIPB, DPPs, OPONI and the PSNI are aware of the severity of the problem. They are addressing the issue with various initiatives to build a better relationship with and gain the confidence of the LGB community in an effort to address the under reporting of homophobic crime.

Summary

'Hate crime' has become an issue of concern for policing throughout the United Kingdom. In Northern Ireland homophobic incidents increased by 176% in the last year, with half of these involving physical attacks. Derry Londonderry has been dubbed the 'hate crime capital of Europe' by the media due to the increase in homophobic crime. The House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee has criticised the Government and policing organisations in Northern Ireland for their failure to address the issue, including the PSNI's low clearance rates in relation to 'hate crime'.

Government and the policing organisations are introducing measures to deal with the problem and are currently developing policies and practices to tackle all 'hate crime', including homophobic crime. This includes efforts to build relationships to encourage the LGB community to feel confident in reporting homophobic incidents to the PSNI. It is currently too early to evaluate the success of these strategies.

2. Methodology

Between February and August 2005, the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) carried out a broad based programme of research on the attitudes and experiences of the LGB population in Northern Ireland. The research was supported by a steering group, with additional guidance from a number of stakeholders. The steering group was drawn from the NIPB, OPONI, PSNI and CoSO in addition to staff from ICR. Stakeholders included individuals and representatives of organisations working specifically with or providing services to lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals and groups.

The research involved a variety of methodologies:

- literature review of research and policy developments;
- self-completion questionnaires;
- focus groups and small group interviews with lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals held in both urban and rural locations;
- one to one in-depth interviews with lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals;
- interviews with representatives from key policing organisations;
- interviews with representatives from community organisations working with lesbian, gay and bisexuals;
- participant observation of policing at pubs, clubs and gay-friendly venues; and
- observation at training sessions on lesbian, gay and bisexual issues for serving police officers.

2.1 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was designed by ICR in conjunction with the NIPB and OPONI. Questions used in previous research carried out for the NIPB and OPONI (ICR, 2003) and surveys previously administered by OPONI (Public Awareness of the Northern Ireland Police Complaints System 2000, 2001, 2002) were incorporated and/or amended as necessary. The steering group considered the questions and an agreed questionnaire was obtained. (See Appendix 1)

In addition, ICR convened a meeting attended by representatives from Lesbian Line, LASI, Unison and Youth Net. Other stakeholder organisations unable to attend (Rainbow, Cara Friend and Glyni) were contacted separately and their comments considered. The representatives of the LGB groups felt that while someone who was asked to complete

the questionnaire may be prepared to spend ten minutes on-line or in the comfort of their home/office, it would be difficult to engage individuals in social settings when the questionnaire would require approximately twenty minutes to complete.

There was some considerable discussion about the inclusion of transgender participants in the survey. While the research was originally to be conducted among the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender communities (LGBT), there was a consensus at the meeting that to include transgender people as a specific category within the title of the research was inappropriate as their status was determined by their gender rather than sexual orientation. Therefore, the status of trans-gender was removed from the title of the questionnaire with the understanding that transgender people self - describing as lesbian, gay or bisexual would be encouraged to respond.

The questionnaire was piloted with a group of six gay men at the Rainbow Drop-In in Belfast. Their findings have been incorporated into the final results. Concerns about the length of the questionnaire were reported by all members of the pilot group and reported back to the commissioning bodies. However no changes were made.

The research sample drew on the experiences of males, females and a small number of those who self-reported as transgender. Respondents included those who are both 'out' in all areas of their lives and those who are selective in revealing their sexual orientation. In total 233 surveys were completed.

Participants were initially contacted through umbrella and self-help organisations and snowballing was also used to make contact. This methodology relies on the collaboration between researcher and respondents working together, with respondents facilitating contact with a wider circle of potential respondents. The method has been used successfully in other studies in Northern Ireland that specifically targeted gay respondents including Quiry (2002), Carolan and Redmond (2003), Jarman and Tennant (2003), and McNamee, (forthcoming).

In total, 18 organisations in Northern Ireland were contacted by telephone and/or letter, and visits were conducted to encourage participation in the distribution of questionnaires and focus groups. These organisations or groups were selected because each had significant numbers of members or service users who describe themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual. A number of posters and post cards were distributed and displayed in gay venues to alert others to the process. Key

organisations that did not respond to the initial request to take part were sent one or more follow-up letters and/or e-mails. Many of those groups who chose to respond positively were drawn from the voluntary and community sectors specifically servicing the LGB sector.

To ensure that adequate numbers of respondents were reached who were not connected to established and already well-researched community groups, ICR also identified and contacted potential focus group participants through gay friendly venues and informal networks of contacts. Due to the location of support organisations for the LGB community who were able to provide venues where the anonymity of participants could be protected, the focus groups were conducted in Belfast and Derry Londonderry. A number of gay websites hosted links to the questionnaire which was posted for anonymous completion on ICR's website. There were 33 responses completed on-line. Gay Community News, the only Ireland-wide magazine for gay men and women, published a letter about the research.

In addition to these distribution methods, the questionnaire was completed by all focus group participants and distributed through other LGB support organisations willing to engage with the research. One lesbian organisation contacted was unable to distribute questionnaires or facilitate focus groups. However, a representative did attend one meeting and the organisation was aware of the research.

Every effort was made to ensure the sample was spread in terms of location, age, gender, community background and educational attainment. This was monitored throughout the data collection period and, when gaps were noted, various groups were targeted to rectify the imbalance.

The principal concern and difficulties presented in accessing respondents arose out of concerns among the LGB community about confidentiality. The second most widely cited reason for people either not, or being unwilling to engage with the research, was the contentious nature of policing in Northern Ireland.

The questionnaire responses were coded and manually input into SPSS, a statistical analysis software package for Microsoft Windows. A complete SPSS data sheet was produced and analyses, including frequencies and cross tabulations, were conducted on SPSS.

The key limitation of the questionnaire was its length and content. This proved to be a deterrent to those being approached in social situations

and therefore the contents of the questionnaire, focusing on knowledge of policing organisations, was described by some respondents in such situations as being 'boring and technical'. This resulted in a number of respondents disengaging before the process was completed.

2.2 Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted to examine respondents' opinions, attitudes and experience of the policing organisations being studied. To guide the discussions, themes and exploratory questions were developed (See Appendix 2). Participants in the majority of focus groups either volunteered or were specifically selected by organisations because they had had some contact with the PSNI.

Potential participants were contacted through a number of media including: the Internet – in particular through Gaydar; the monthly Irish periodical 'Gay Community News'; a number of gay and gay-friendly venues and websites; informal networks; and community organisations. A total of eight organisations were ultimately in a position to support the research by the co-ordination of one or more focus groups. Facility payments were offered by ICR to focus group organisers or organisations to cover administrative and refreshment costs. Administrative and organisational constraints resulted in the focus groups being larger and sometimes more unwieldy than the research team would ideally have liked. This hurdle was addressed through participants being offered, both at the beginning and end of each session, the opportunity to discuss matters in more depth at a later occasion.

Focus groups were conducted within a mixed gender and mixed community context whenever possible. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss particularly sensitive issues outside the group in one-to-one interviews and a number chose to take up this option. Focus group participants, if agreeable, were also given questionnaires and stamped addressed envelopes to distribute among their LGB friends to complete and post to ICR.

ICR were originally commissioned to consider the views of adults. However, young people in Northern Ireland are acknowledged to have a substantial and growing level of uneasy relationships and engagement with the police (Hamilton et al 2003:13-15, Ellison 2001, McVeigh 1994). Due to the high number of homophobic incidents against young LGB people, a number of support groups and umbrella organisations, specifically set up to consider issues of sexual

orientation and sexual health, were keen to facilitate focus groups with their membership.

Nine LGB focus groups were conducted with 90 participants taking part. Of these, 63 were adult and 27 were aged under 18 years. No participants reported that they were living with a visible or hidden disability and only two reported as coming from a minority ethnic or multiple heritage background.

Table 2.1: Focus Group Participants

Organisation	Number of Participants	Gender	Age
1 Cara Friend	4	4 males	>30
2 Gay and Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland	17	9 males 8 females	<18
3 Gay Police Association Northern Ireland	8	6 males 2 females	20-50
4 Lesbian Line	9	9 females	20-50
5 National Union of Students	11	8 males 3 females	18-30
6 Queerspace	18	11 males 7 females	20-50
7 Rainbow Derry	3	3 females	30
8 Rainbow Derry	10	10 males	18-40
9 TASKK, Drumcree	10	8 males 2 females	<18

A number of organisations contacted also informed the qualitative findings within this report. While they were unable to co-ordinate the facilitation of focus groups, they indicated a willingness to be interviewed about the issues. Visits were made and interviews conducted with key workers, service users and individuals connected to the following organisations: Dykes with Babes; PSNI Trainers; Rainbow Belfast; and ShOUT – Youth Net. Others felt they were more suitably placed to support the work exclusively through the circulation of information and the provision of contacts. These include: Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO); Greater Belfast Community Network; and National Union of Students (NUS). A number of individuals informed of the research by the above groups initiated contact with ICR on particular issues.

2.3 Confidentiality and sensitivity

In conducting research with the LGB population, the issue of confidentiality was particularly important, especially with regards to young people. While some are 'out' in all areas of their lives, others may only be so to select individuals or in specific situations, for example to some or all of their friends and/or families, but not at work. A recent study (Loudes, 2003) provided evidence of prejudice, homophobia and violence experienced by young LGB people who may also experience isolation from family and friends. There were also concerns about visibility and recognition due to the small number of prosecutions and the low incidence of reporting to the PSNI among LGB groups.

The fear of 'outing' was highlighted by concerns around filling in the questionnaire on line. Despite confidentiality being assured, respondents were still not confident that their contact details were not being monitored. One non-respondent lesbian aged fifty plus said *"I wouldn't fill it in because they would have my email address."* Fear of being 'outed' by taking part in the research was further compounded by the political situation in Northern Ireland where there is non-support in some quarters of the police and related organisations. For that reason, researchers on occasions had to reassure participants that they were independent of the police and associated organisations.

Throughout the process of this research, ICR have attempted to positively address the challenges faced by carrying out work on LGB issues from within a hetero-normative context. Consequently, the office where meetings and some key interviews were conducted prominently displays a selection of anti-homophobic literature and posters in order that LGB participants would know they were in a safe environment. The research team approached a number of lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals and community groups when seeking in-house training.

There was a need for sensitivity to the concerns around confidentiality and also the political opinions of participants. This was of particular concern where focus groups had participants from both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds and included people who had family members in the PSNI. Participants in focus groups were all advised that individual interviews could be arranged if they wished to discuss any issues further.

2.4 Interviews with key personnel

With regard to the policing organisations, in-depth interviews were conducted with a number of key personnel involved in policy development and practice-based work, including: the NIPB's Director of Planning; Managers of District Policing Partnerships; an Inspector with the PSNI's Community Safety Branch; a number of the PSNI Minority Liaison Officers; and the Director of Investigations at OPONI. An in-depth interview was also carried out with the manager of Northern Ireland Victim Support in Lurgan.

Interviews were held with MLOs in South Belfast, Limavady, Ballymena, Bangor, Dungannon and Foyle DCUs and with DPP Managers in South Belfast, Ballymena, Derry Londonderry and Limavady. These areas were identified because they either had a high incidence of 'hate crime' or were used for comparison purposes to assess the implementation of policies and practices in areas where 'hate crime' is not seen to be an issue.

3. Demographic Breakdown of Survey Respondents

A total of 233 questionnaires were received, of which 33 (14%) were completed on-line. Questions about sexual orientation are not presently included in the Census of Population, consequently there are no reliable estimates of the size and demographic profile of the LGB population in Northern Ireland. It is thus impossible to assess the representativeness of this sample. However, comparable research in Northern Ireland has been based upon samples, some of which have not approached the size of that obtained in this project; for example:

- 186 respondents to a survey on homophobic harassment and violence (Jarman and Tenant, 2003);
- between 122 and 195 gay men responded to various Rainbow Project surveys (White, 1998; Toner and McIlrath, 1999; Rainbow Project, 1999);
- 85 respondents from Northern Ireland in the Stonewall UK-wide survey (Mason and Palmer, 1996);
- 45 in a survey of young LGB people in the North-West (Birkett, 1998);
- 160 gay and lesbian women contacted by all techniques by LASI research (Quiery, 2002); and
- 362 in a Youthnet survey of the needs of young gay and lesbian people (Youthnet, 2003).

Table 3.1 shows that over two thirds of respondents were aged under 36; 38% were aged 18-25, with a further 29% aged 26-35. Just 4% of respondents were aged over 50. No responses were received from anyone aged over 65.⁴

⁴ Technical note:

- The percentages given in the following tables have been rounded to the nearest whole number, and thus may not add up to 100%.
- Missing responses have occasionally been excluded from the analyses and tables, so base numbers may not always be consistent.
- The following conventions are used: "0%": figure in cell is less than 0.5%; "-": cell is empty.

Table 3.1: Age groups of respondents

Age group	Number	%
<18	9	4%
18 – 25	89	38%
26 – 35	67	29%
36 – 50	58	25%
51 – 65	10	4%
>65	0	-
Total	233	100%

Table 3.2 shows that nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) were male and just over one third (36%) were female; only four individuals said they were transgender.

Table 3.2: Gender of respondents

Gender	Number	%
Male	146	63%
Female	83	36%
Transgender	4	2%
Total	233	100%

While there were proportionately more males than females in the 18 to 25 age group (43% compared to 29%) and proportionately more females than males in the 36 to 50 age group (35% compared to 20%), this variation was not statistically significant.

In terms of ethnic background, 98% of respondents were white and 2% (5 individuals) were non-white, while Table 3.3 indicates that 58% of respondents were gay males and 31% were lesbian or gay females.

Table 3.3: Sexual orientation of respondents

Sexual orientation	Number	%
Gay male	135	58%
Lesbian / gay female	73	31%
Bisexual female	10	4%
Bisexual male	9	4%
Unsure male	2	1%
Unsure transgender	2	1%
Bisexual transgender	1	0%
Unsure female	1	0%
Total	233	100%

In terms of their community background, 43% of respondents said they were Catholic; just over a quarter (27%) said they were Protestant and the remaining 30% said they were of some other religion or of no religion (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Religion of respondents

Religion	Number	%
Catholic	99	42%
Protestant	62	27%
None	53	23%
Other	8	3%
Other Christian	5	2%
Buddhist	2	1%
Jewish	2	1%
Baha'i	1	0%
Missing	1	0%
Total	233	100%

Looking at respondents' economic activity, the majority (59%) were working full- or part-time, while over a quarter (28%) were in some form of full-time education or training (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Economic activity of respondents

Economic activity	Number	%
Full/Part Time working	137	59%
Full Time University	39	17%
Unable to work – sick	16	7%
Unemployed	14	6%
Full Time College	13	6%
Full Time training	6	3%
At school	4	2%
Full Time carer	3	1%
Retired	1	0%
Total	233	100%

Twenty-eight respondents (12%) said that they were parents (see Table 3.6). Female respondents were significantly more likely to say that they were parents than were male and transgender respondents (20% compared to 8% and none respectively; Pearson Chi-Square = 7.07, df = 2, $p < .05$)⁵.

Table 3.6: Gender by parental status

Gender	Parental status				Total	
	Parent Number	%	Non-parent Number	%	Number	%
Female	16	20%	64	80%	80	100%
Male	12	8%	132	92%	144	100%
Transgender	0	-	4	100%	4	100%
Total	28	12%	200	88%	228	100%

Finally, postcodes were used to record the areas in which the respondents lived. Table 3.7 shows that the largest proportion (42%) lived in the Belfast area (BT1 to BT17 inclusive), with a further 11% living in Derry Londonderry (BT47 and BT48).

⁵ The chi-square test is a statistical methodology designed to determine whether, and by how much, an observed distribution of data differs from that which would be expected by chance or random variations. The statistic is calculated by using the raw data rather than a percentage calculated from them. A low value for chi-square indicates that the observed distribution is likely to have occurred by chance and thus provides evidence that some variable or factor is acting upon the data. The size of this effect is assessed using the concept of statistical significance: e.g. a value of <0.01 indicates that there is less than one chance in a hundred of the observed distribution of the data occurring by chance and would be very strong evidence for an effect.

Table 3.7: Postal towns of respondents

Postal town	Number	%
Belfast: BT1-17	99	42%
Londonderry: BT47, 48	26	11%
Newry: BT34, 35	17	7%
Craigavon: BT62-67	13	6%
Newtownabbey: BT36, 37	11	5%
Holywood: BT18	7	3%
Lisburn: BT27, 28	6	3%
Bangor: BT19, 20	5	2%
Magherafelt: BT45	5	2%
Armagh: BT60, 61	4	2%
Carrickfergus: BT38	4	2%
Portstewart: BT55	4	2%
Newtownards: BT22, 23	3	1%
Ballymoney: BT53	2	1%
Banbridge: BT32	2	1%
Coleraine: BT51, 52	2	1%
Downpatrick: BT30	2	1%
Enniskillen: BT74, 92-94	2	1%
Antrim: BT41	1	0%
Caledon: BT68	1	0%
Dromore: BT25	1	0%
Dungannon: BT70, 71	1	0%
Hillsborough: BT26	1	0%
Limavady: BT49	1	0%
Maghera: BT46	1	0%
Newcastle: BT33	1	0%
Portrush: BT56	1	0%
Missing	10	4%
Total	233	100%

4. The Police Service of Northern Ireland: Survey Findings

This section reviews the findings from the survey in relation to respondents' attitudes to, and experiences of, the PSNI. This is followed by a more detailed discussion of the LGB population's experiences of policing based on the findings of the focus groups.

4.1 Contact with the police

One hundred and ten (47%) of the 233 respondents said that they had been in contact with the police in the previous 12 months; this is a somewhat higher proportion than the 19% of respondents in the NIPB module of the April 2005 Omnibus Survey (NIPB 2005d), who had been in contact with the PSNI within the last 12 months due to being a victim of crime. The chances of respondents being in contact with the police were not significantly affected by any demographic factor.

Table 4.1 shows that the main reason given for contacting police was to report a crime (61% of respondents). While results from the NIPB module of the April 2005 Omnibus Survey (NIPB, 2005d) also established that this was the most frequent reason that respondents gave for contacting the police, this latter research found that the proportion of respondents that had done so was much lower (28%).

Table 4.1: Reasons for being in contact with the police

Reasons for being in contact with the police	Number	%
Respondent reported a crime	67	61%
Respondent was stopped and questioned	17	15%
Respondent witnessed a crime	16	14%
Respondent asked or was asked for some information	15	14%
Respondent required to produce driving documents	15	14%
Respondent works for or with the police	9	8%
Respondent was accused of committing a crime	7	6%
Respondent is or is related to a police officer	6	5%
Respondent was asked to move on	6	5%
Respondent was involved in a traffic accident	6	5%
Other reason	7	6%

(Note: Percentages add to more than 100%, as respondents could choose more than one option)

4.2 Victimisation

Seventy-two (31%) of the 233 respondents said that they had been the victim of a crime in the previous 12 months. Respondents' chances of victimisation were not significantly affected by their sexual orientation, gender, age group or religion. The majority of these 72 respondents (42 respondents, equivalent to 58% of those who had been victimised and 18% of the total sample) said that they thought that the crime of which they had been a victim was motivated by homophobia; 23 respondents thought that the crime was not motivated by homophobia (32% of those who had been victimised), while the remaining seven respondents were unsure. Again, the likelihood of respondents saying that the crime of which they had been a victim was homophobic in nature was not significantly affected by their sexual orientation, gender, age group or religion.

Forty-three of the 72 respondents who had been the victim of a crime in the previous 12 months (equivalent to 60% of those who had been victimised and 18% of the total sample), said that they had reported the incident to the police; 29 respondents (40% of those who had been victimised) had not reported the crime. The likelihood of respondents saying that they had reported the incident to the police was not significantly affected by sexual orientation, gender, age group, religion or whether or not the crime was perceived as being homophobic in nature.

The majority (56%) of those respondents who had reported the crime to the police said they were to some extent satisfied with the way the police had dealt with the crime (see Table 4.2). Respondents' satisfaction with the police response was not significantly affected by their sexual orientation, gender, age group, religion or whether or not they perceived the crime as being homophobic in nature.

Table 4.2: Victims of crime: satisfaction with police response

Satisfaction	Number	%
Very satisfied	11	26%
Satisfied	13	30%
Dissatisfied	9	21%
Very dissatisfied	9	21%
Can't say	1	2%
Total	43	100%

Twenty-nine respondents had not reported the crime to the police. Table

4.3 shows that respondents most frequently said they didn't report the crime because they felt that the police couldn't help or that the police wouldn't be interested.

Table 4.3: Victims of crime: reasons for not reporting crime to the police

Reasons for not reporting crime to the police	Number	%
Respondent felt the police couldn't help	14	48%
Respondent felt the police wouldn't be interested	11	38%
Respondent had had poor experience of the police previously	9	31%
Respondent thought the police would ignore them because of their sexual orientation	9	31%
Respondent does not support the current policing system	8	28%
Respondent thought the police would be hostile to them because of their sexual orientation	8	28%
The incident was too trivial	8	28%
Respondent was worried about the impact upon their family	6	21%
Respondent didn't want anyone to know their sexual orientation	4	14%
Respondent didn't want the police to know their sexual orientation	4	14%
Respondent was scared of being "outed"	4	14%
Respondent was scared of provoking reprisal	3	10%
Respondent thought the police would ignore them because of their transgender status	2	7%
Respondent was too upset	2	7%
Respondent didn't want anyone to know their transgender status	1	3%
Other reason	2	7%

(Note: Percentages add to more than 100%, as respondents could choose more than one option)

4.3 Problems with the police

Ninety-two (39%) of the 233 respondents said that they had experienced problems with the police at some time. The chances of respondents having problems with the police were not significantly affected by their sexual orientation, gender, age group or religion. Table 4.4 shows that the largest proportion of respondents (32%) said that they had experienced

a problem within the last year, although a quarter (25%) said that the problem had occurred more than five years ago.

Table 4.4: When most recent problem with the police was experienced

When most recent problem was experienced	Number	%
Within last year	29	32%
Between 1 and 3 years ago	27	29%
Between 3 and 5 years ago	9	10%
More than 5 years ago	23	25%
Can't say	4	4%
Total	92	100%

Table 4.5 shows that respondents had experienced a great variety of problems with the police. Many of these were related to the service that they had received from the police: unsatisfactory service (39 respondents, equivalent to 42% of those that had experienced problems and 17% of the total sample), failure of the police to keep respondents informed of progress (32%), to follow up a call (30%), to take them seriously (27%) or to do their duty (20%). However, 40% said that police officers had been rude or impolite to them and 25% said that the police had discriminated against them because of their sexual orientation.

Table 4.5: Types of problem experienced with the police

Problem experienced	Number	%
Police service was unsatisfactory	39	42%
Officer was rude or impolite	37	40%
Police didn't keep respondent informed about progress	29	32%
Police didn't follow up a call	28	30%
Police didn't take respondent seriously	25	27%
Discrimination because of sexual orientation	23	25%
Police harassment	20	22%
Police did not carry out their duty properly	18	20%
Police refused to help	13	14%
Police stopped or searched without reason	13	14%
Police wrongly accused respondent of misbehaviour	13	14%
Officer used homophobic language	12	13%
Police did not follow proper procedures	11	12%
Police behaved violently	10	11%
Officer used sectarian language	9	10%

Police took an item of respondent's property	6	7%
Discrimination because of ethnic origin	5	5%
Police searched respondent's house without reason	5	5%
Discrimination on other grounds	3	3%
Officer used sexist language	3	3%
Officer used racist language	1	1%
Other problem	7	8%

(Note: Percentages add to more than 100% as respondents could choose more than one option)

However, only 19 (21%) of the 92 respondents that had experienced a problem actually lodged a complaint about it; 10 had complained to the police, four to the Police Ombudsman's Office, three to an LGBT Group, and one each to the Independent Commission for Police Complaints or to a solicitor. Three-quarters (75%) of the 73 respondents who had not lodged a complaint said that this was because they thought that nothing would be done about their complaint (see Table 4.6); research carried out by the Police Ombudsman's Office has also found this to be the most frequently cited reason for not complaining (OPONI, 2004a).

Table 4.6: Reasons for not complaining about problems experienced with the police

Reason for not complaining	Number	%
Thought nothing would be done about it	55	75%
The incident wasn't serious enough	24	33%
Scared of police reprisals	19	26%
Couldn't be bothered	18	25%
Doesn't support the current policing system here	16	22%
Didn't know how to complain	14	19%
Worried about the impact upon their family	13	18%
Thought complaint would be disregarded because of sexual orientation	11	15%
Other people in respondent's community discouraged them	9	12%
Scared of being "outed"	9	12%
Didn't know to whom to complain	7	10%
Didn't want anyone to know their sexual orientation	5	7%

Didn't want to make trouble for the police	2	3%
Thought complaint would be disregarded because of transgender status	1	1%
Other reason	2	3%

(Note: Percentages add to more than 100%, as respondents could choose more than one option)

4.4 Policing priorities

When asked about what they thought the police's priorities should be, nearly half (49%) of all respondents said that the police should concentrate on homophobic crime (see Table 4.7). Two-fifths (40%) said that dealing with assaults should be a priority, while other activities attracted smaller proportions of responses. These findings vary greatly from those reported in the DPP Public Consultation Survey 2004 (NIPB, 2004b), in which issues such as burglary (49%) were seen as priorities and homophobic crime was rated as a problem by just 1% of respondents.

Table 4.7: Respondents' policing priorities

Police priority	Number	%
Homophobic crime	111	49%
Assaults	92	40%
Drug dealing	57	25%
Crime prevention	46	20%
Paramilitary activity	45	20%
Racist crime	45	20%
Responding promptly to emergencies	39	17%
Community safety	38	17%
Burglary	36	16%
Domestic violence	31	14%
Organised crime/racketeering	28	12%
Car crime	25	11%
Sectarian crime	24	11%
Public disorder	21	9%
Muggings	18	8%
Community education/training	16	7%
Religious 'hate crime'	14	6%
Drug use	11	5%
Transphobic crime	7	3%
Road traffic policing	3	1%
Other	10	4%

(Note: Percentages add to more than 100%, as respondents could choose more than one option)

4.5 Perceptions of the police

Respondents were asked a series of 10 questions regarding their perceptions of the police. The responses to these questions are summarised in Table 4.8. It can be seen that opinions were frequently quite divided, with a majority agreeing on only two issues - that the police are professional (51%) and that they are there for respondents' protection (55%). Large minorities agreed that the police are helpful (47%) and acceptable (45%), while opinions were fairly equally divided on the police's honesty (34% agreeing and 36% disagreeing) and whether the police have improved since the change of name from the RUC to the PSNI (32% agreeing and 31% disagreeing). However, the largest proportion of respondents disagreeing (38%) thought that the police are not fair, and more respondents thought the police are homophobic and transphobic than thought they are not (38% compared to 21% and 30% compared to 13% respectively). However, it should be noted that the largest proportions answered 'Don't know' when asked if they thought the police were homophobic (41%) and transphobic (57%). Finally, nearly half of all respondents (47%) felt that the police are not aware of the issues relating to the LGB community; only 20% thought that the police show this awareness.

Table 4.8: Respondents' perceptions of the police

Perceptions of the police	% of responses		
	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
The police are honest	34%	36%	30%
The police are professional	51%	27%	22%
The police are helpful	47%	28%	25%
The police are fair	30%	38%	32%
The police are there for your protection	55%	26%	19%
The police are acceptable	45%	34%	21%
The police have improved since the change of name	32%	31%	37%
The police are homophobic	38%	21%	41%
The police are transphobic	30%	13%	57%
The police are aware of issues relating to the LGB community	20%	47%	33%

Respondents' answers to these questions were not significantly affected by their sexual orientation, gender or age group. However, their responses to almost all of the questions did vary significantly according

to their religion. It can be seen from Table 4.9 and Figure 4.1 that Protestant respondents were much more likely than Catholic respondents to agree that the police show positive traits such as honesty, professionalism, helpfulness and fairness. They were also more likely to agree that the police are there for their protection and that they are acceptable. Catholic respondents were more likely than were Protestant respondents to agree that the police are homophobic and transphobic. There were only very minor differences between the communities in their views on whether or not the police have improved since the change of name from the RUC to the PSNI and whether or not the police are aware of the issues relating to the LGB community.

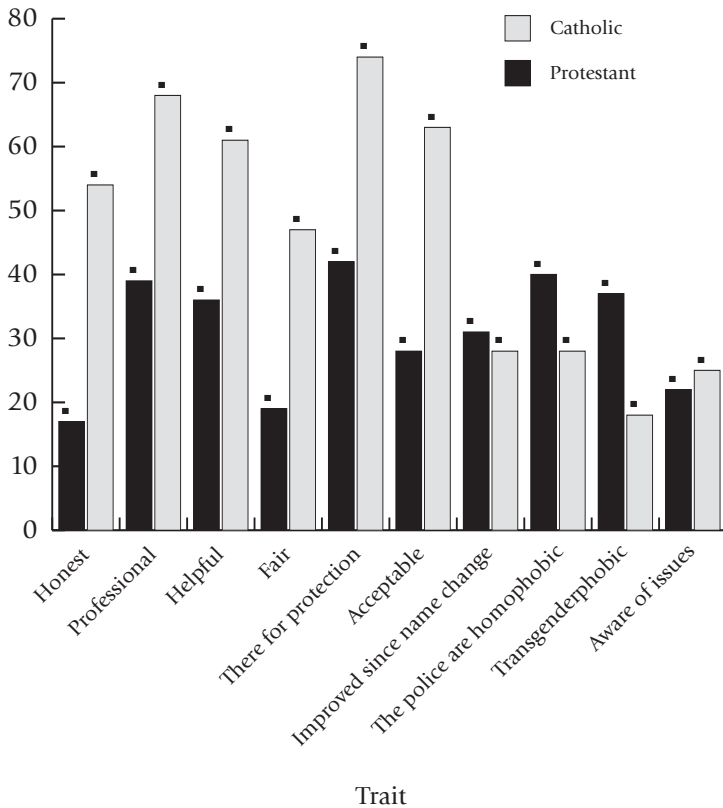
Table 4.9: Perceptions of the police by religion

Perceptions of the police	% agreeing			Statistical Significance
	Religion			
	Catholic	Protestant	All Other	
The police are honest	17%	54%	39%	***
The police are professional	39%	68%	53%	**
The police are helpful	36%	61%	49%	*
The police are fair	19%	47%	29%	**
The police are there for your protection	42%	74%	55%	**
The police are acceptable	28%	63%	51%	***
The police have improved since the change of name	31%	28%	38%	NS
The police are homophobic	40%	28%	45%	*
The police are transphobic	37%	18%	33%	*
The police are aware of issues relating to the LGB community	22%	25%	11%	NS

Statistical significance⁶: NS = Not significant; * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$.

⁶ Statistical significance shows the level of probability that an independent variable has had an affect on a dependent variable rather than a particular event having happened by chance. By convention, a probability level of $p = 0.05$ is referred to as significant, while a probability level of $p = 0.01$ (a 1% chance) is 'highly significant' (see footnote 5 on Chi-square).

Figure4.1: Catholic and Protestant respondents' views on the police



The experience of having been a victim of crime had no bearing upon respondents' perceptions of the police. However, the experience of having had contact with the police did have some effect upon their perceptions (see Table 4.10). Thus when compared to those respondents who had had no contact with the police, respondents who had been in contact with the police were:

- More likely to agree that the police are honest;
- More likely to agree that the police are professional;
- More likely to agree that the police are helpful;
- More likely to agree that the police are fair;
- More likely to agree that the police are there for their protection; and
- More likely to agree that the police have improved since the change of name.

Table 4.10: Perceptions of the police by contact with the police

Perceptions of the police	% of responses		Statistical significance
	Contact	No contact	
The police are honest	42%	29%	*
The police are professional	59%	44%	*
The police are helpful	53%	42%	*
The police are fair	38%	22%	*
The police are there for your protection	60%	51%	*
The police are acceptable	50%	40%	NS
The police have improved since the change of name	41%	26%	*
The police are transphobic	36%	25%	NS
The police are aware of issues relating to the LGB community	24%	16%	NS

Statistical significance: NS = Not significant; * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

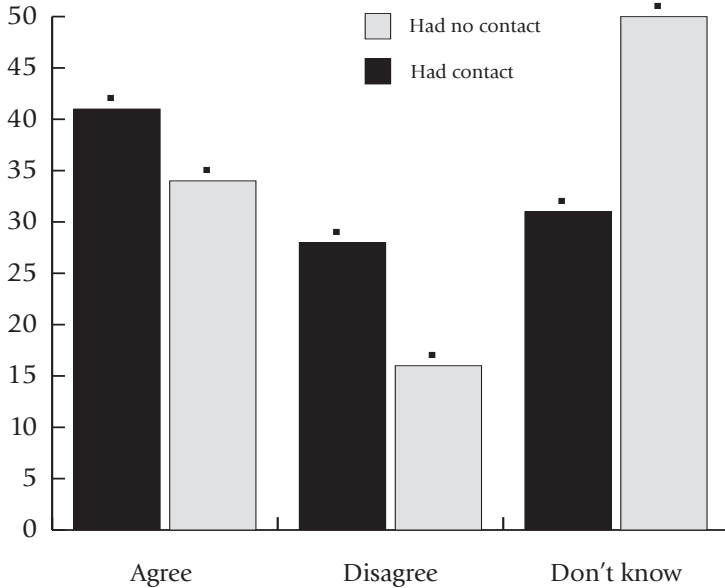
Responses to the question asking whether or not the police are homophobic were also significantly affected by respondents' experience of contact with the police (Pearson Chi-Square = 9.34, $df = 2$, $p < .01$; see Table 4.11 and Figure 4.2)⁷. This variation, however, was slightly more complex: respondents who reported having had contact with the police were less likely to respond "Don't Know" (31% compared to 50% of respondents who had had no contact with the police), and more likely to express both agreement and disagreement (41% compared to 34% and 28% compared to 16% respectively).

Table 4.11: Perceptions of police homophobia by contact with the police

Experience of contact with the police	The police are homophobic		
	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Contact	41%	28%	31%
No contact	34%	16%	50%

⁷ The Chi-square test is described in footnote 5.

Figure 4.2: Perceptions of police homophobia and contact with the police



Those respondents who had experienced problems with the police displayed significantly poorer perceptions of the police than did those respondents who had not experienced problems (see Table 4.12). Thus respondents who had experienced problems were less likely to agree that the police are honest, professional, helpful, fair, there for their protection, acceptable, have improved since the change of name and aware of issues relating to the LGB community. They were more likely to agree that the police are homophobic and transphobic.

Table 4.12: Perceptions of the police by experienced problems

Perceptions of the police	% of responses		Statistical significance
	Problems	No problems	
The police are honest	26%	42%	***
The police are professional	36%	62%	***
The police are helpful	31%	58%	***
The police are fair	20%	36%	***
The police are there for your protection	43%	64%	***
The police are acceptable	30%	55%	***
The police have improved since the change of name	30%	35%	**
The police are homophobic	54%	26%	***
The police are transphobic	45%	21%	***
The police are aware of issues relating to the LGB community	13%	24%	***

Statistical significance: NS = Not significant; * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

4.6 Joining the police

Of the 227 respondents who answered the question, only a quarter (25%) said that they would be willing to consider joining the PSNI. Catholic respondents were less likely to consider this career option than were Protestants (20% compared to 35%), but this difference was not statistically significant.

The reason most frequently given by respondents for not wishing to join the PSNI was a fear that they would not be treated well in the service because of their sexual orientation (46%; see Table 4.13). However, as has been found in previous surveys (Hamilton et al, 2003), fear of attack upon themselves or upon their family were also significant deterring factors (both cited by 42% of respondents) as was the disapproval of family and friends (32%).

Table 4.13: Respondents' reasons for not considering joining the PSNI

Reason for not considering joining the PSNI	Number	%
Not treated well in the police because of sexual orientation	76	46%
Fear attack on self	70	42%
Fear of attack on family	70	42%
Family/friends wouldn't approve	54	32%
Not chosen because of sexual orientation	52	31%
Not treated well in the police because of religion	44	26%
Because of age (too old or too young)	37	22%
Don't support the police	34	20%
Not chosen because of religion	32	19%
Unable to maintain contact with family and friends	28	17%
Poor pay and working conditions in the police	14	8%
Because of gender	8	5%
Not treated well in the police because of ethnic origin	6	4%
Not chosen because of ethnic origin	5	3%
Not treated well in the police because of transgender status	4	2%
Not chosen because of transgender status	3	2%
Other	30	18%

(Note: Percentages add to more than 100%, as respondents could choose more than one option)

Summary

Just under half of the respondents (47%) said that they had been in contact with the police in the previous 12 months, with the main reason being to report a crime. Thirty-one percent of respondents said they had been the victim of a crime in the previous 12 months, and most of these thought that the crime was motivated by homophobia. The majority of those victimised respondents said they had reported the crime to the police, and the majority of these said they were to some extent satisfied with the way the police had dealt with the crime. The reasons that respondents most frequently gave for not reporting the crime were that they felt the police couldn't help and that the police wouldn't be interested.

Over a third of respondents said that they had experienced problems with the police at some time, with a third of these experiencing a problem within the last year. The most frequently cited problems were that the service was unsatisfactory or that a police officer was rude or impolite. Many also related to unsatisfactory service or failure of the police to keep respondents informed, to follow up a call, to take them seriously or to do their duty. Large minorities of respondents said that police officers had discriminated against them because of their sexual orientation. However, about four in five of those respondents who had experienced a problem did not complain about it, mostly because they thought that nothing would be done about their complaint.

When asked about what they thought the police's priorities should be, half of all respondents said that the police should concentrate on homophobic crime.

Respondents' perceptions of the police were diverse. Most thought that the police were professional and that they were there for respondents' protection, and large minorities thought that the police were helpful and acceptable. Opinions were fairly equally divided on the police's honesty and whether the police had improved since the change of name from the RUC to the PSNI. More respondents thought the police were homophobic and transphobic than thought they were not, and nearly half felt that the police were not aware of the issues relating to the LGB community.

While respondents' answers to these questions were not significantly affected by sexual orientation, gender or age group, their responses did vary significantly according to their religion: Protestant respondents were much more likely than Catholic respondents to agree that the police showed positive traits (honesty, professionalism, helpfulness and fairness) and to agree that the police were there for their protection and were acceptable. However, Catholic respondents were more likely than Protestant respondents to agree that the police were homophobic and transphobic. Those respondents who had been in contact with the police were generally more likely to rate them positively than those who had not, while those respondents who had experienced problems with the police displayed significantly poorer perceptions of the police than did those respondents who had not experienced problems.

Finally, one quarter of survey respondents said that they would be willing to consider joining the PSNI. Catholics were slightly (but not significantly) less likely to consider this career option than Protestants.

The reason most frequently given by respondents for not wishing to join the PSNI was a fear that they wouldn't be treated well in the service because of their sexual orientation. However, fear of attack upon themselves or upon their family were also significant discouraging factors, as was the disapproval of family and friends.

5. Perceptions of Policing: Focus Group Findings

A series of nine focus groups were conducted in offices in Belfast and Derry Londonderry to facilitate the participants' chosen venues. Table 3.1 gives a breakdown of the gender and age range of participants. Of the 90 participants, 63 were adult and 27 were under 18. No participants reported that they were living with a visible or hidden disability, only two reported as coming from a minority ethnic or multiple heritage background. One focus group comprised serving officers and support workers employed by the PSNI.

Within this section of the report respondents' contributions are acknowledged by sexual orientation, gender, geographical location, age, profession where relevant and activist status. While the majority are recorded as being Belfast or Derry Londonderry based, due to the location of the focus group, many resided outside these two cities. In some cases participants indicated their place of residency and willingness for this to be acknowledged in the report. Many of the comments indicate a willingness by participants to engage with policing organisations. Some are keen to encourage their peers, seeing the benefit of strengthened and appropriate relationships between the LGB community and the PSNI. Those who indicated a willingness to take part in the research made a commitment to do so on the understanding that it provided an opportunity to affect policy and practice change to policing arrangements.

5.1 Policing in a changing political context

There's been a history of lesbian, gay and bisexual people being non-sectarian and being prepared to meet and show solidarity with each other through the worst of the troubles. Perhaps particularly so for those from paramilitary-dominated areas. (Lesbian activist, Belfast, aged 40-50)

The above sentiment, by a woman who has worked and campaigned on behalf of the LGB community in Northern Ireland for some 20 years, was echoed in all focus groups and each of these was conducted in a frank, open and cross community context. Yet within Northern Ireland, it is understandable that sectarian, highly politicised and emotive issues are of concern to some members of the LGB community. For some, this is evident in their reluctance to cross established community norms

around very basic engagement with the police:

I'm a community worker and it just wouldn't be acceptable in this community for me to put up posters, never mind for the police to come into this community centre. I have to judge and balance what good I can do as a worker and what is worth me putting myself on the line for. (Male, Portadown, community worker)

In some areas of North Belfast or West Belfast you don't have choice of where to report, you just can't go into a police station. (Gay male, Belfast)

If you're living in a community with difficulties over policing, you're less likely to report it if someone puts a brick through your window or graffitis up a wall where you live. (Gay female, Belfast)

However, for others, considerable changes are acknowledged:

I am an ex Republican prisoner, jailed for conspiracy to shoot a policeman. In Castlereagh they broke my finger and dislocated my shoulder, I had such abuse laid on me, I never got sanitary wear for 5 days. I hated them. So now it's ironic that I am receiving mass cards, having my home paint bombed and graffitied with Gay Cop Lover. I understand that my part of the peace dividend is to realise that others have to be accorded dignity, humanity and that the human process is not just about the great grief I suffered. (Gay female, Derry Londonderry)

These changes were often encouraged and enabled by those wishing to advocate for change as gay community activists, irrespective of their community or political background:

Gay Nationalists in the area are desperate to be able to engage with the police. I don't care what I have to do so long as a gay man or woman will be treated with respect when they go to a police station. (Gay male, Derry Londonderry, Republican, Gay activist)

One respondent felt that it was inappropriate to simplify issues of policing and homophobia by looking through a bi-polar community lens:

While some revel in saying that there's a long association between loyalism and right wingism, there's a social veneer of Republicanism in terms of genuflections to liberal attitudes. My experiences as an older middle class Prod reporting to the police are different to those of a younger working class Protestant and his in turn will be different to a middle class or a working class Catholic. (Male, Belfast, aged 60)

If you're involved in gay organisations publicly, then you are identified first and foremost as a lesbian and so your community's attitudes to policing may not matter as much to you. But it might not be the case for younger lesbians and gay men who are negotiating coming out in communities where being gay and engaging with the police are two separate but equally problematic issues for you. (Gay female, Belfast, Lesbian activist)

Evidence from interviews conducted for this report indicate that for those in the LGB community from a Nationalist and/or Republican background, the issue of engaging with the PSNI to address homophobic crime is starting to take precedence in the current political climate.

Targeting or Over-Policing?

For many respondents there was an uneasy tension for individuals who, at one level recognised the need for preventative policing to address homophobia, but who equally felt that this gave an excuse for the targeting of gay men and women outside gay venues or in known cruising areas:

When PSNI Landrovers are present outside gay bars, this is not to act as a deterrent to address homophobic attacks.' (Gay female, Derry Londonderry)

Maybe they're a bit more vigilant at gay bars than straight ones, but that doesn't mean they're going to be there to support gay people. (Bi-sexual female, Belfast)

There was concern voiced by a number of gay male bar staff that police had been seen taking a note of number plates outside one gay-friendly Belfast club. This was of particular concern to both Protestant and Catholic respondents because of suspected paramilitary and protection links with the venue. Some had experienced over-policing of gay men and women in public places of outdoor recreation:

I think the Police should work from the premise that when a gay man is out jogging in a park he is doing it because he wants to keep fit and they should not equate this with cruising. (Gay male, Belfast)

Gay men are often assumed to be involved in unlawful activity, but not necessarily crime, if you follow the distinction, and it would appear that often the police are not trying to prevent 'hate crime', but to catch gay men. (Gay male, Belfast)

The LGB community are a difficult group to police. Where the police are in evidence in the vicinity of a gay venue, they are viewed with suspicion. Whatever their motive for recording car registrations outside gay venues, there is a widespread belief in the LGB community that the police are homophobic and when added to the concern among those who are afraid of being identified at a gay venue, it becomes obvious that their presence will not be welcomed.

CCTV/Personal Alarms

The multiple ways in which gay men are vulnerable to attack was a recurring theme in focus groups. The role the police could pro-actively play in championing preventative measures was frequently discussed:

When I've been on the help-line I've had many threats over the phone and it crosses your mind that when I leave this building, someone might be waiting. They could easily patrol here at times when we are leaving. (Gay male, Belfast)

The poor placing of CCTV cameras in the vicinity of offices administering to gay organisations did not provide any reassurance to users of these buildings:

People know that this side of the street is not covered by CCTV and that it falls between two district command units which means when we come out late at night and specially when people are on their own after working the help-line – you are particularly vulnerable. (Gay male, Belfast)

The gratis provision of personal alarms was welcomed by many:

'They waived the charge to us, but they only gave them to the women, none of the men on the helpline has them.' (Gay female, Belfast)

There was concern that while police responses to CCTV calls might provide reassurance in some instances, there was also concern that it was being misused by others, for homophobic and discriminatory reasons:

We had just came out of the Odyssey one night, it was lovely, a really romantic night, moonlight on the river, palm trees and we were just kissing. And then this landrover pulled up and the officer got out all embarrassed and said 'look, can you cool it a wee bit' – he told us he'd had a complaint from the security guard who had seen us on CCTV. Now that wouldn't have happened to a straight couple and quite frankly it was a waste of police resources just like it would have been if we'd made a complaint. (Gay male, Belfast)

The above quote illustrates some of the problems the PSNI will encounter when trying to protect the LGB community. There are social as well as policing issues involved, but the public will often expect the police to enforce social norms that can then be interpreted as police homophobia. While the respondent felt that the police response to a complaint from a member of the public was a waste of police resources, it is reasonable to suppose that two men displaying public affection may have led to a homophobic incident, although it should be noted that public displays of affection are not illegal. At this point, irrespective of equality rights, it would have clearly become a policing issue.

5.2 Reporting

Some respondents indicated a willingness to report homophobic and other incidents to the PSNI, irrespective of what any outcome might be, as they valued the monitoring process that this would feed into:

It becomes a question of measuring up your personal and your civic responsibility. There are issues around bullying, around suicide that occur for people who are not yet out and are not confident about reporting, so it becomes just a part of the process of normalisation. (Gay male, Belfast)

Some felt that direct contact was the most appropriate method for reporting:

One to one is the best method, they have to listen to you that way. (Gay male, Enniskillen)

Others wanted the option for anonymous reporting to ensure monitoring was recorded:

....there are historically so many reasons why people have not wanted to report homophobic crimes. (Gay male, Belfast, gay activist)

On-line reporting was welcomed by some while others voiced concern about how this might be abused:

....what guarantee is there that it wouldn't be binned, or someone would get to see it if you just did it on-line? (Gay woman, Belfast)

They need a huge public promotion that it's safe to report a crime and your sexual orientation is not the issue. (Gay woman, Armagh, Lesbian aged 17)

There is still a suspicion around reporting on-line. However, for others it

is welcomed as an anonymous way to report an incident and is a useful tool in monitoring homophobic incidents. The issue of confidentiality has emerged as one of the most important issues in encouraging reporting of homophobic incidents.

Reluctance to report

A variety of reasons were discussed in focus groups that would put people off reporting homophobic incidents:

- a legacy of the political situation

I report homophobic attacks reluctantly not because of my politics, but because I'm not sure what the paramilitary response might be in my area and how that information would ripple out. (Gay male, Belfast)

- fear of being 'outed'

If reporting to the police means you are likely to be 'outed' – well why would you? (Gay male, Belfast)

- time commitment

I was attacked outside St Anne's Cathedral one Friday and I umd and ahd until Sunday when I went to Musgrave Street. I delayed because I wasn't sure that it would be beneficial in the long term and it certainly wasn't going to be a positive experience for me. (Gay male, Belfast)

- probability of no positive outcome

*I'd been using a telephone box and I was punched and called queer b*****, so I flagged down a police car but they didn't think there was anything they could do about it – they suggested that it was to be expected because I was near Botanic Gardens which is a place where you might get some cruising. (Gay male, Belfast)*

- fear of police homophobia/lack of sensitive treatment

Eight or ten young guys between 16 and 20 jumped me one night in Randalstown and they gave me a severe kicking, but I didn't want it known with the police as I didn't think they would be sympathetic or would keep it private. (Gay, Belfast, PSNI support worker)

- poor procedural practice

My solicitor said "make sure that Ballynaveigh log and record the incident in the log book, because they're so apathetic they sometimes don't bother". (Gay male, Belfast)

Not only the attitude, but the perceived attitude of PSNI officers in dealing with reports of homophobic incidents, will be paramount in instilling confidence in reporting among the LGB community. Evidence of the high levels of homophobia within the PSNI was most obvious from the experiences of LGB officers and support staff. This needs to be seriously addressed at all levels in the service before the LGB community will feel able to trust the PSNI to deal effectively with reports of homophobic incidents.

Victim Support

Some don't want to deal sympathetically with victims, so they excuse themselves and pass the buck by having Victim Support there to do what should be an integral part of policing work, i.e. providing an empathetic and understanding service. (Gay male, Portadown)

There appeared to be a degree of confusion within focus groups about the police's role in the provision of support to victims and the relationship between the PSNI and the charity Victim Support.

Many respondents felt that detectives should begin conducting their investigations and their work from the premise that victims are individuals rather than a crime statistic. An overview of responses from gay males revealed that the majority of victims of homophobic incidents preferred women officers to be present at initial interviews and they acknowledged that this was in part due to a conservative and gendered view of women as nurturers and men being perceived to be more interested in maintaining a dominant position of authority:

It's a generalisation, but I do think that women are more supportive of LGBT groups. (Gay male, Drumcree)

I find women easier to talk to when it's a physical thing you're describing. (Gay male, Belfast)

Lesbian women were less likely to make these gendered assumptions. However some drew parallels between victims of homophobic attacks and victims of domestic violence. They suggested that on occasions, support offered by men and in particular those in uniform, could present a challenge to those in shock after an attack that left them feeling powerless and subordinate:

It stands to reason that if you're feeling intimidated, threatened and vulnerable, the last thing you want is some great big, cold hearted man standing there in a uniform. (Gay female, Belfast)

Groups displayed mixed levels of concern that investigating officers should be identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Perhaps unsurprisingly resistance to this came from police officers:

It doesn't take a gay police officer to deal with them (victims), you deal with everyone the same within the confines of the law. (Gay male, Belfast, serving PSNI officer)

A number of gay males who did not work within the police service concurred with this position but chose to qualify it further:

Just because of my sexual preference it shouldn't matter who I talk to as long as I can talk in confidence, but that's what I'm not convinced about. (Gay male, civil servant, aged 19)

One gay male who had reported a physical attack on himself reluctantly highlighted a need for heterosexual officers to be accompanied by a gay PSNI officer until confidence in the service to lesbians, gays and bisexuals is improved. Officers' use of hetero-normative language when visiting homes was challenging for many respondents who were victims of opportunistic and non-homophobic crimes. A number of lesbian respondents were concerned about officers' assumption that couples would be heterosexual:

I thought I was going to get a wee pat on the head when he asked was your husband out? (Gay female, Larne)

When I phoned Strandtown to say I heard people moving about in the vacant house next door they said "what do you want me to do about it, have your husband go and have a look around for you". (Gay female, Belfast)

Some of the issues highlighted above are gender rather than sexual orientation issues. However, they create a perception of homophobia rather than sexism where the complainant is sensitive to their sexuality rather than their gender.

5.3 Insensitive policing

Some lesbian women reported that their sexual orientation had no impact on individual officers:

I'm sure they knew very quickly that we were partners through our interaction, but this was not commented on at all. (Gay female, Ballymena)

They had to know we were partners by the way we were caring for each other and they were very supportive to us at that time when we most needed it. (Gay female, Armagh, aged 50)

Conversely, a significant number of other respondents, more frequently male, recorded concern about the lack of sensitivity demonstrated by certain PSNI officers when dealing with both gay men and women in the course of policing public order offences. They reported this as being a deterrent in their willingness to further report and in their confidence at being dealt with in a sensitive matter at a time when they were most vulnerable:

There is a high incidence of gay men and women turning to substance abuse and the mental health issues that arise from that sometimes require a great deal more sensitivity than the police are able to manage or are trained for. (Gay male, Belfast, aged 30, Teacher)

People are extremely vulnerable if they are not out. If they have otherwise lived a blameless life, teachers, clergy, school staff, police officers, university staff, medics – they are perhaps more so than others when there is a likelihood that an officer's insensitivity over an attack or an indiscretion might change their whole life and livelihood. (Gay male, Belfast, aged 50)

Forthcoming research by the Rainbow Project (McNamee, forthcoming) is expected to indicate that in Northern Ireland young gay men are more likely to attempt self-harm than straight youth. Given the high incidence of attempted self-harm due to internalised homophobia by some young gay men, respondents to focus groups felt that the police should be particularly vigilant and display understanding when dealing with victims of homophobic 'hate crime':

It's not just hatred from others, but there's also self-hatred that follows – suicide, people taking their own lives because of them trying to keep their heads high. (Bi-sexual male, Belfast, aged 17)

Power imbalances between civilians and the police are reinforced by having to engage with officers who are insensitive and in some instances prejudicial. This appears to lead to feelings of helplessness and ultimate disengagement.

Outing by police of victim/perpetrators of crime

The sexual orientation of lesbian, gay and bisexual men and women is for many a deeply private matter. Some have made considered choices to reveal this aspect of their identity in specific contexts and to ensure that it is carefully concealed in others. Unexpected visits by the police, both in and out of uniform, were recorded as having upset this balance:

I nearly died when they come to my work, I had just started work and my mother had sent them there. I wasn't even out at home and I had to explain to everyone that day. I really wasn't ready to do that. (Gay male, Armagh)

I work as a youth worker and I am not out where I work so I was mortified when they came to my work. (Gay male, Belfast)

During the investigation of the murder of two gay men in 2002, the deceased victims were publicly 'outed' by default as a process of police enquiries and this continues to create an atmosphere of concern for some. Conversely, one gay community activist felt the balance was tipped towards hiding the sexual orientation of victims of homophobic crimes:

There tends to be an over-sensitivity to the needs of the family rather than society as a whole by 'protecting' the sexuality of a victim. (Gay, community activist)

Where the police are accused of insensitivity in inadvertently 'outing' those who are LGB, the LGB community itself is divided on this issue. Those who are 'activists' in the area of 'gay rights' are often of the belief that people should be open about their sexuality. While this could be a decisive factor in their argument for social acceptance of the LGB community, the majority of those who are LGB are not openly so. As 'outing' is such a major concern, it will continue to frustrate efforts to address homophobic crime. The police do not bear sole responsibility for this, but it is perhaps the major issue they need to be aware of when engaging with the LGB community.

Domestic violence

Within the LGB community, domestic violence can be seen to occur with some frequency in two distinct spheres; same sex domestic violence between partners and violence perpetrated by family members as a result of someone's gay sexual orientation being revealed. In both situations, there is a feeling that despite working closely with community organisations, police officers are not up to speed in understanding or recognising the triggers, nuances and subtleties of language and behaviour within these situations that may indicate underlying domestic tensions:

They need to realise that they are still playing catch up with domestic same sex violence, particularly outside Belfast where they are certainly not sensitive to the issue of being 'out'. (Gay male, Kilrea)

Same sex domestics are not deemed to be as serious as heterosexual domestics by the police. In Fermanagh there's two drunk lesbians who are always hammering each other and the chat about them is belittling to them both as women and as lesbians. (Gay female, Belfast, serving PSNI officer)

If you go into Strand Barracks, you be interviewed, but you get no word back, no response. No dignity is given to a person who's been injured. You try to put a brave face on it, to follow through, but you know they're sniggering and laughing when you go through them gates and then they'll leave you there for two to three hours. (Gay male, Creggan, victim of domestic violence)

Many of the issues surrounding police response to domestic violence are the same whether those involved are LGB or not. However, as this area of policing involves an invasion of privacy, there is a higher requirement for sensitivity in dealing with the LGB community. Where a family dispute has arisen because a member of the family has 'come out', there will be a range of sensitivities involved and officers will require an awareness of the issues involved in an area of policing they may not have expected to encounter.

Gay youth

In order to gain credibility with some gay youth and those umbrella organisations representing their interests, participants discussed the need for the police to more successfully demonstrate confidentiality, sensitivity, and an active concern for child protection issues around future self harm and domestic violence when dealing with young people

and issues of sexual orientation. It is commonplace that young lesbian, gay and bisexual people living in rural and small conurbations experience more isolation and report facing more difficulties in coming out and living openly as gay than those within urban areas, where there are more opportunities to socialise and where networks of support services are more developed. Many move to Derry Londonderry and Belfast for these and other reasons:

Young people are much more vulnerable if they're gay back home. (Gay female, Lurgan)

Young people are often unaware of the legislation and the reporting processes that are in place to record homophobic 'hate crime'. Focus group participants from one youth organisation suggested that tangible, age appropriate, well-designed and visually-led materials could aid this process. Furthermore, two policy workers within a gay youth project pointed to the heavy reliance of statutory agencies on the LGB sector when addressing sexual orientation issues. However, this did not translate into any financial benefits to small voluntary groups working with young people who identify as lesbian, gay and bisexual. Consequently they urged that a resource commitment be made by the PSNI when drawing on the experience of young people and recruiting them to advisory groups.

Homophobia in the PSNI

My father was a squaddy in the police. He used to say "all them faggots should be put on an island and shot." It took me 3 years, a bottle of sleeping tablets, a bottle of vodka, 2 days in an intensive care unit and 2 weeks in coronary care to come out to him. (Gay male, Belfast, Diversity Trainer delivering to the PSNI)

*I don't give a **** about going into Tennent Street, but equally Tennent Street don't give a **** about me going in there – they're just as homophobic as the people they're supposed to be policing.*

In general, the PSNI was perceived to be out of touch with lesbian, gay and bisexual men and women:

There's people that I love and respect being abused physically, emotionally and verbally and they don't have faith to go to an organisation that should be there to protect and support them. They (PSNI) have a tainted, out of date view that needs to change. (Gay male, Limavady)

The focus groups revealed that homophobia in the PSNI is perceived to be rife. This view was unanimously supported by the one focus group which comprised eight gay men and lesbians who were serving PSNI officers and support staff workers:

I've been in many situations where inspectors and sergeants pass homophobic remarks in the canteen or when recruits are put with gay officers and this of course filters through to cleaners, to typists and other support workers.

A catalogue of homophobic activities were logged that included officers having graffiti on lockers, abusive mail put into in trays, pictures and names on notice boards, songs and comments both overtly homophobic or else fishing for information about an individual's sexual orientation. Officers and support staff were rarely likely to report these instances, or to bring partners to office social events:

Yeah, because I know what the attitudes are, in the city it's bad enough, but in the country.... X is a station that has something of a reputation of being so intolerant. (Gay male, serving PSNI officer)

It is obvious from the experiences of LGB PSNI personnel that there is an issue to be addressed within the PSNI. If homophobic attitudes are allowed at any level, particularly senior levels within PSNI, it will appear to all ranks that homophobia is acceptable. Where training may address the problem to an extent, only a clear and consistent approach will provide the message to all officers that homophobic attitudes and behaviour are unacceptable.

5.4 Minority Liaison Officers

Some respondents were keen that MLOs were visibly lesbian, gay or bisexual and that they should be more willing to identify themselves as such:

I think it would be good to have someone whose picture and name was in the paper to report to, like they do in the South, then you'd have the confidence to know the person you were reporting to knew what they were talking about, or at least had the courage to stand up and be counted. (Gay female, Belfast)

Others paid more cognisance to the security concerns facing serving officers but still welcomed an increased visibility of gay men and women in the service:

To have an LGB officer means you don't have to start from scratch. You're dealing with the here and now. (Gay male, Belfast)

As someone who has a very cynical view of the police, I would make more effort to report a crime if I did not see them just carrying out PR exercises, but knew that an individual gay or lesbian PSNI officer would be available to me. (Gay female, Belfast)

PSNI officers appeared to concur with this view:

I would be more comfortable telling somebody who was gay, it's easier to talk to a gay person about what's happened. You know they're not judging you, they're not looking down and then going out to their colleagues and saying 'you're not going to believe this...' (Gay male, Belfast, serving PSNI officer)

There was concern voiced that neither police operators nor officers were adequately informed about the MLOs:

When I phoned Police Exchange I asked to speak with the minority liaison officer who deals with homophobic crime in the Castlereagh area and they said I don't know if we've got one. They were nearly embarrassed to answer when I said homophobic crime.

A significant number of lesbian women in focus groups who were parents, were concerned that their sexual orientation or the sexual orientation of their and others' children gave rise to homophobic bullying in schools. Furthermore they were concerned about the rise in the use of the term 'gay' as an insult. While much good work by the PSNI was noted to be occurring in schools on the general subject of bullying and discrimination, it was felt that rarely, if ever, was homophobic bullying included in this important form of outreach work:

The PSNI have a role to play in stopping the domino effect of 'hate crime' by ensuring that there is no hierarchy of prejudice – homophobia and disablism are no less a serious crime than racism.

One long serving police support worker in post for 13 years commented on the lack of visibility of lesbians, gays or bisexuals within the organisation, but could see the value of this being addressed organisationally:

I have no contact with other gay people in the organisation. We are an asset to this organisation, we're not being utilised. (Gay PSNI support worker)

As with the LGB community in general, there will be those who will feel that their sexual orientation bears no relation to how they carry out their role and may not wish it to be common knowledge among their colleagues. However, there will also be serving police officers who feel they have a responsibility to identify as LGB in order to promote understanding of LGB issues. There is clearly evidence that this would be welcomed by large sections of the LGB community and may also be useful in areas of training and education.

‘Out’reach

Those participants who supported police attempts to proactively engage with the LGB community welcomed an increase in outreach to both the LGB sector and the wider community on LGB related issues, but whose specific responsibility this should be was a matter for concern. Some suggested that the PSNI MLOs alone should carry the full weight of this task and others felt it should be work conducted by all officers:

I set up a gay support group for men in Limavady, with 15 members indicating interest. We would like anyone at all from the PSNI to come along and talk with us, but I guess it is unlikely, the area is quite religious with many churches and chapels. (Gay male, Limavady)

Gay community activists in Belfast were keen that officers should take part in the Gay Pride march that takes place annually in various locations across the United Kingdom, including Belfast. They also feel that LGB PSNI officers should be encouraged to take part in workshops for the non-LGB community on the unacceptability of homophobic ‘hate crime’. However this suggestion was not widely supported by LGB PSNI officers who took part in the focus group. These participants were concerned about their personal safety as police officers rather than exposing their sexuality.

Training

The issue of training in a number of areas arose spontaneously in many focus groups. A number of those connected to both the PSNI and to gay organisations were concerned at the level of training available to new recruits and existing staff on issues about sexual orientation. The need for training to include the following arose in two or more focus groups:

- More sustained and continued commitment to providing ongoing practical and theoretical training. Current one or two hour slots is not considered adequate by those delivering and receiving training.

Who's going to have the confidence to start to question their own practice after one hour? Who's going to have the confidence to start to question their sergeant's practice after two? If they're serious, then bring it on in a real and meaningful way.

- More sensitive methods for the probing of information so as to build up confidence in traumatised victims:

Some officer asking who else lives here with you? If you're not out about your relationship it doesn't exactly help you to have confidence in the police.

- Ways to share and elicit cross-sectoral information about victims of homophobic attacks:

If the PSNI and the Health Service joined up for example then you wouldn't be asked the same stupid questions several times in one night if you're the victim of a crime that has been particularly traumatic.

- Challenging police homophobia through project work on LGB issues during training:

New recruits come to me to research all sorts of minority groups and issues as part of their training, but in all my time in the [PSNI], they have never, ever come to get information on gay matters. (PSNI support staff, Belfast)

Recruitment

The interest in a more visible gay presence within the PSNI led on to questions about the PSNI's current recruitment process. The question about whether sexual orientation should be included as a question on forms was considered in a number of focus groups. A wide range of responses were recorded with concerns voiced about the value and purpose of recording this information if it was purely for internal administrative monitoring purposes:

If you didn't fill it in are you automatically monitored as straight or gay?

There were a number of debates around whether LGB people are always the most appropriate people to support victims and investigate homophobic crimes:

I can't say yes or no, but it would instil an air of confidence if the PSNI were clearly to be seen to be pushing that agenda forward and this should impact on their recruitment policies and procedures.

The monitoring of sexual orientation in employment is of concern to all public sector employers. In dealing with a group who in many cases do not wish to divulge their sexual orientation this will be a slow and evolving process, more informed by social discourse than assurances from employers. However, the onus to create a safe environment for LGB employees is even more pertinent for an organisation with the highest public profile in dealing with 'hate crime'.

Summary

The LGB community in Northern Ireland is as much a part of Northern Ireland society as the heterosexual community. They will have the same prejudices and have attitudes that are informed by their community and political backgrounds. Consequently, some of the issues facing the LGB community are the same as those prevailing in Northern Ireland society in general and have a bearing on the attitudes of individuals toward the police regardless of their sexual orientation. In some areas of Northern Ireland there are more incidents of homophobic crime than in others which appears to affect attitudes toward the police. For example, gay people in Derry Londonderry are more likely to see the need to engage with the police due to a high level of homophobic crime. This has become more important in many cases than their political affiliations. The police in the area have seized the opportunity to engage with, and along with other statutory organisations in Derry Londonderry are building relationships between themselves and the LGB community. However, those from nationalist areas are now facing further alienation from their neighbours through their association with the PSNI.

The focus group discussions suggest that male police officers are more supportive of gay females than gay males. Where gay males said they would find it easier to talk to a female police officer, gay females reported being treated in a supportive and understanding way by male police officers, even where they felt that their sexual orientation was obvious to the officers. When females reported having had a problem with male police officers, it appeared to be around the assumption that they had a male partner, or that they felt patronised. It could be argued that this was a gender, rather than a sexual orientation issue.

Due to some activities engaged in by gay males that contravene norms, the police are still seen as targeting rather than protecting gay males in particular. This would appear, from some of the experiences of the gay males in the focus groups, to make them feel that their sexual orientation is the main focus for some police officers. The profile of MLOs, as

expected, depended on the priority of homophobic crime in their geographical area. Many in the focus groups felt that it would build confidence in the LGB community if some LGB police officers were 'out' about their sexuality. However, some gay police officers had understandable reservations about their personal security as police officers and were reluctant to reveal their sexuality.

The experience of gay police officers shows the high level of homophobia within the PSNI. This appears to be endorsed particularly among the male hierarchy within the PSNI, who were not seen to be willing to address this issue. When an officer reported a homophobic incident, they did not feel there was support and either opted to be transferred to another station, or a transfer was used as the way to deal with the issue.

6. Police Accountability: the Northern Ireland Policing Board and District Policing Partnerships

Speaking at a Conference in Belfast in 2003⁸, Hugh Orde, the Chief Constable of the PSNI, claimed he was *'the most accountable police chief in Europe'*. Since the police reform programme began following the publication of the Patten Report (1999)⁹ a diverse range of organisations have been established to ensure the PSNI are fully accountable to the wider society. These organisations include the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the District Policing Partnerships and the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. They each play significant roles in police accountability and are now considered in turn.

6.1 Northern Ireland Policing Board

Policing and the arrangements for its governance have been contentious issues since the foundation of the Northern Ireland administration in 1921. The establishment in 1998 of the Independent Commission on Policing (The Patten Commission) led to a radical examination of the arrangements for police accountability in Northern Ireland, resulting in the abolition of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland and its replacement by the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB). The NIPB, composed of ten elected politicians (MLAs) and nine people independently appointed by the Secretary of State, held its first meeting in November 2001. Its various roles and responsibilities are clearly defined by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. It has responsibility for producing a policing plan that determines policing priorities and it has to keep itself informed of trends and patterns in police recruitment and in complaints against the police. It is also required to monitor the performance of the PSNI in complying with the Human Rights Act 1998, a responsibility unique amongst police oversight bodies in the United

⁸ Policing the Police, Conference organised by the Office of the Police Ombudsman in the Europa Hotel, Belfast, Nov. 2003.

⁹ <http://www.belfast.org.uk/report.htm>

Kingdom (NIPB, 2005b). However, the current refusal of Sinn Féin Assembly Members to take up their seats on the Board can be viewed as but one of the reasons detracting somewhat from its representativeness.

Latest figures for public awareness of the NIPB from the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey (April 2005) show that awareness of its role has decreased since its formation. In October 2003, 87% of those surveyed were aware of the NIPB. This had fallen to 82% in April 2005, although was still higher than the 72% of the LGB community surveyed by ICR.

Monitoring the number of racist and homophobic crimes and incidents and increasing the clearance rate for racist and homophobic crimes are targets included in the Northern Ireland Policing Plan for 2005 – 2006. The NIPB sets the targets following consultation with the Secretary of State, the NIO, Chief Constable, DPPs and the public. The NIPB's Director of Planning believes that the current approach to Policing target setting puts the NIPB ahead of any other policing authority or policing service in Great Britain. Furthermore, the NIPB commissioned this research project in response to the rise in 'hate crime' incidents and also the NIPB's Equality Impact Assessment on its data collection policy. This discovered that the NIPB did not have enough information on the views of minority communities in Northern Ireland about policing issues. The NIPB's Director of Planning said:

We would see the research as certainly ground breaking in getting a handle on this growing problem and certainly using the recommendations from the N.I. Affairs Committee Report to carry out our oversight role of the Chief Constable. The big thing about the Policing Plan targets is that we receive a quarterly update from the Chief Constable in public on the performance of PSNI against policing plan targets. That puts 'hate crime' firmly in the spotlight because we asked to monitor the number of incidents. We also asked to increase clearance rates and this year we've asked for a base line to be set on sectarian incidents and crimes against the disabled and also clearance rates against both.

6.2 Awareness of the NIPB – Survey findings

Overall, nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) said that they had heard of the NIPB compared to 82% of respondents who had heard of the NIPB in the April 2005 Omnibus Survey (NIPB, 2005d). There were no significant variations in responses to this question according to sexual orientation, gender, age or religion.

The majority of respondents who had heard of the NIPB (54%) thought that one of the major roles of the NIPB is to set policing priorities (see

Table 6.1), and large proportions thought that it also sets policing targets (42%), improves policing (39%) and oversees policing by holding the Chief Constable to account (36%), which is the Board's actual role. (This last figure compares to 77% of respondents in the NIPB module of the April 2005 Omnibus Survey who thought that the NIPB's primary role is "to oversee policing and hold the Chief Constable and the PSNI publicly to account"). Some misconceptions were also apparent, however, as 21% of respondents thought that the NIPB tells the police what to do, 18% thought that it investigates complaints against the police and 15% thought that it tells the Chief Constable what to do. Finally, 18% of respondents said they didn't know what the NIPB's role is (compared to just 2% for OPONI). Again, there were no consistent significant variations in responses to this question according to sexual orientation, gender, age or religion, although Catholic respondents were less likely than Protestant respondents to be aware of a role for the NIPB in informing the public about policing issues (17% compared to 43%).

Table 6.1: Respondents' knowledge of the role of the NIPB

Role of the NIPB	Number	% of respondents that had heard of the NIPB	% of all respondents
To set policing priorities	86	54%	37%
To set policing targets	67	42%	29%
To improve policing	62	39%	27%
To oversee policing by holding the Chief Constable to account	57	36%	24%
To inform the public about policing issues	49	31%	21%
To enquire into police policies	48	30%	21%
To control police spending	33	21%	14%
To tell the police what to do	33	21%	14%
To investigate complaints against the police made by the public	28	18%	12%
To tell the Chief Constable what to do	24	15%	10%
Other	2	1%	1%
Don't know	28	18%	12%

(Note: Percentages add to more than 100%, as respondents could choose more than one option)

As far as LGB representation on the NIPB was concerned, the great majority (81%) of those respondents who were aware of the Board thought that it should have openly gay members. Only 1% did not think there should be such representation, while the remaining respondents thought that it didn't matter one way or the other (14%) or could not make a judgement on the issue (4%). There were no significant variations in responses to this question according to sexual orientation, gender, age or religion.

6.3 Perceptions of the NIPB

Respondents were asked a series of 10 questions regarding their perceptions of the NIPB. The responses to these questions are summarised in Table 6.2, and it is immediately noticeable that for all but two of the questions the largest proportions of responses were in the "Don't know" category. However, the largest proportions of respondents agreed that the NIPB is necessary and that it can help change the police (49% and 45% respectively). Opinions were divided about whether the NIPB is independent of the police (32% agreeing and 30% disagreeing), and many doubted its impartiality (21% agreeing that it is impartial but 32% disagreeing). Few respondents were able to make an assessment of the NIPB's relationship with the LGB community, with two-thirds being unable to say whether it is transphobic, 60% being unable to say if it is homophobic, and 57% being unable to say if it is aware of the issues relating to the LGB community. However, those respondents who did make a judgement were more likely to agree that the NIPB is homophobic and transphobic than to disagree. Respondents' answers to this set of questions were not significantly affected by sexual orientation, gender or age; however, Catholic respondents were less likely than Protestant respondents to agree that the NIPB is impartial (11% compared to 31%) and that it would help the police do a good job (17% compared to 52%).

Table 6.2: Respondents' perceptions of the NIPB

Perceptions of the NIPB	% of responses		
	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
The NIPB is impartial	21%	32%	47%
The NIPB will help the police do a good job	38%	17%	45%
The NIPB is independent of the police	32%	30%	38%
The NIPB has made policing more effective	22%	20%	57%
The NIPB is necessary	49%	12%	39%
The NIPB can help change the police	45%	11%	44%
The NIPB can help make the police more acceptable	41%	14%	45%
The NIPB is homophobic	23%	17%	60%
The NIPB is transphobic	19%	14%	67%
The NIPB is aware of issues relating to the LGB community	16%	27%	57%

Focus group findings

Few focus group respondents had any interest in discussing the role of the NIPB and were more interested in organisations they felt they were likely to engage directly with. Their primary knowledge of the NIPB was with regard to homophobic statements made by one member:

He should be kicked off it, but made to give a public apology first. (Gay youth, Belfast)

Political representatives serving on the NIPB are regarded as representing the views of the NIPB and the PSNI. While homophobic views may be in accordance with the views of their political party, they may also be detrimental to the advancement of policing policy. The response of the NIPB then becomes the focus. This highlights the difficulty for any public body in dealing with social or moral issues where a diverse range of political and public opinion is fanned by media attention.

6.4 District Policing Partnerships

The NIPB set up DPPs¹⁰ in 2003, acting on recommendations made in the Report of the Independent Commission on Policing and legislated for in Section 3 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. The DPPs are comprised of elected members of the local District Council and independent members drawn from the local community through a public advertisement. The role of the DPPs is to prioritise local policing issues in consultation with the local community, contribute to the policies and priorities for policing in their area and monitor local police performance. There are 26 DPPs in Northern Ireland, one in each District Council Area. Belfast DPP is divided into four sub-groups to match the PSNI structure of East Belfast, North Belfast, South Belfast and West Belfast. This means that a DPP is in place to monitor local PSNI performance in each of the 29 PSNI DCUs.

Figures from the April 2005 Omnibus Survey (NIPB, 2005d) show that public awareness of DPPs has decreased since their founding. In October 2003 and April 2004, 66% of those surveyed said they had heard of DPPs, which fell to 60% in October 2004, with a further fall to 58% in April 2005. Although fewer people are aware of the DPPs, there appears to be a growing confidence in their role, with 74% of those who had heard of DPPs in April 2005 having some, a lot or total confidence in their ability to help address local policing issues compared to 66% in October 2004. However this confidence seems shallow, as under a third (31%) in April 2005 believed that their local DPP had helped to improve policing in their local area. This result does, however, show a steady improvement from 22% in April 2004 and 24% in October 2004. The Omnibus Survey figures do not correspond with those from the ICR survey (see Section 6.5: Table 6.3), which records a lower knowledge of DPPs.

There are problems of representativeness on DPPs. Sinn Féin Councillors have refused to take up their seats and furthermore, most political appointments tend to be male. It is interesting to note that all nine independent members appointed to the Ards DPP were female in order to address the imbalance and ensure that the DPP represented the area's general population. However the sexual orientation of members is not known. It is pertinent to note that there are no DPP members with a declared interest in representing the concerns of the LGB population. This is particularly relevant in Belfast and Derry Londonderry, the two

¹⁰ At the time of writing DPPs will be reformed in late 2005.

geographical urban areas in which LGB community groups are principally involved in working with the PSNI to combat homophobic crime. Evidence given to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (2005:22) is perhaps indicative of the challenges facing those keen to include the voice of lesbian, gay and bisexuals into DPPs:

'I suspect that west of the Bann people who are gay and lesbian are still to a large extent closet gay and lesbian. I think that most people in rural Northern Ireland are quite secretive about their gender if they are gay or lesbian. I suspect that this is a tradition and I suspect it is through fear.' (Mr Ivor Paisley, Cookstown District Council)

In light of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Report urging those from, or representing, minority communities to keep their democratic representatives in local councils and the UK Parliament fully informed about such matters, recent homophobic comments by both a member of the NIPB and a DPP member raises a concern about the suitability of political representatives serving on public bodies. It would appear that without a code of conduct in place to ensure that appointees are 'diversity/discrimination proofed' then the interests of vulnerable sections of the community are not being best served. Given the high incidence of prejudice and discrimination facing the LGB sector in NI, this need for DPP members to comply with equality legislation is recognised by the NIPB, particularly in light of media coverage of homophobic remarks made by one of its Board members:

'People hold personal views, but when dealing with DPP or Board business, or acting as a spokesman or representative of either, you cannot represent those views...expressing those (homophobic) views in the public forum and being associated with the DPP or Policing Board is not acceptable. ...We have a policy for removing people from DPPs and that process runs its course...' (Director of Planning, NIPB)

However, although there is the intent to tackle blatant homophobia in relation to serving members of the NIPB or DPPs, there does not appear to be a protocol in place for removing members who make public statements to this effect. In the case of the NIPB, a member can only be removed on the recommendation of the Secretary of State. In June 2004, at a NIPB meeting, an elected member of a DPP was considered to be:

...unfit to discharge the functions as a member of a DPP under Schedule 3 paragraph 7 (1) (e) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, and as such

ordered that he be removed, with immediate effect, from the office of political member.... DPP News Summer 2004 (NIPB, 2004c)

The NIPB Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea, speaking after the meeting said that the Board had considered the case within the parameters of the law. The DPP elected member had been convicted at Laganside Magistrates Court in April 2004 of harassing a fellow candidate over his sexual orientation during the 2001 local government elections. Professor Rea went on to say:

....the policy now being put in place, as a result of this case, will ensure that any future cases will be dealt with in an effective and equitable way.

The policy referred to states that in future:

...if any member of a DPP is convicted during their time in office of a criminal offence committed before the date of their appointment they may be considered unfit to continue in office.

This does not appear to address the issue of public homophobic comments of the type for which the NIPB recently censured one of its members.

6.5 Awareness of DPPs - Survey findings

Just under half of respondents (110 or 48%) had heard of the DPPs, compared with 58% of respondents who had heard of DPPs in the April 2005 Omnibus Survey (NIPB, 2005d). Awareness was significantly higher among older respondents, with over 60% of those aged 26 and over having heard of the DPPs compared to 28% of 18 to 25 year olds and 11% of those aged under 18 (Pearson Chi-Square = 34.19, df = 4, $p < .001$). Similarly, 59% of Protestant respondents had heard of the DPPs compared to 32% of Catholic respondents but 61% of respondents of other or no religion; this variation was statistically significant (Pearson Chi-Square = 18.54, df = 2, $p < .001$).

The majority of respondents who had heard of DPPs (53%) thought that one of the major roles of the DPPs is to oversee policing at a local level (see Table 6.3), and almost half thought they also improve local policing (48%, compared with 31% of respondents in the NIPB module of the April 2005 Omnibus Survey) and set local policing priorities (46%). There were some misconceptions about the role of the DPPs: 14% of respondents thought that DPPs tell local police commanders what to do,

10% thought that they investigate complaints against the police and 10% thought that they tell the local police what to do. Finally, 18% of respondents said they did not know what the DPPs' role is. Again, there were no consistent significant variations in responses to this question according to sexual orientation, gender, age or religion.

Table 6.3: Respondents' knowledge of the role of DPPs

Role of DPPs	Number	% of respondents that had heard of DPPs	% of all respondents
To oversee policing at a local level	58	53%	25%
To improve local policing	52	48%	22%
To set local policing priorities	50	46%	21%
To inform the public about local policing issues	40	37%	17%
To set local policing targets	38	35%	16%
To enquire into local police policies	33	30%	14%
To tell the District Commander what to do	15	14%	6%
To investigate complaints against the police	11	10%	5%
To tell the local police what to do	11	10%	5%
Other	2	2%	1%
Don't know	20	18%	9%

(Note: Percentages add to more than 100%, as respondents could choose more than one option)

As far as LGB representation on DPPs was concerned, three-quarters (75%) of those respondents who were aware of DPPs thought that they should have openly gay members. Only 1% did not think there should be such representation, while the remaining respondents thought that it didn't matter one way or the other (20%) or could not make a judgement on the issue (4%). There were no significant variations in responses to this question according to sexual orientation, gender, age or religion.

6.6 Perceptions of DPPs

Respondents were asked a series of 11 questions regarding their perceptions of DPPs. Their responses to these questions are summarised

in Table 6.4, and it is immediately noticeable that for all but one of the questions the largest proportions of responses were in the “Don’t know” category. Opinions were divided about whether DPPs are impartial (25% agreeing and 23% disagreeing), and many thought that they are not representative of their local communities (32% disagreeing that they are representative with 25% agreeing - compared with 39% of respondents in the DPP Public Consultation Survey May 2004 who were very confident/confident that the membership of their local DPP reflected the local area.). However, the largest proportions of respondents agreed that DPPs are necessary (45%), that they can help change the police (37%) and that they can help make the police more acceptable (36%). Few respondents were able to make an assessment of DPPs’ relationships with the LGB community, with around two-thirds being unable to say whether they are homophobic or transphobic (66% and 71% respectively) and 57% being unable to say if they are aware of the issues relating to the LGB community. However, those respondents who did make a judgement were more likely to agree that DPPs were homophobic and transphobic than to disagree. Respondents’ answers to this set of questions were not significantly affected by sexual orientation, gender, age or religion.

Table 6.4: Respondents’ perceptions of DPPs

Perceptions of DPPs	% of responses		
	Agree	Disagree	Don’t know
DPPs are impartial	25%	23%	51%
DPPs will help the police do a good job	36%	16%	48%
DPPs are independent of the police	36%	21%	43%
DPPs have made policing more effective	23%	18%	59%
DPPs are representative of their local communities	25%	32%	43%
DPPs are necessary	45%	10%	44%
DPPs can help change the police	37%	15%	48%
DPPs can help make the police more acceptable	36%	13%	51%
DPPs are homophobic	24%	10%	66%
DPPs are transphobic	22%	7%	71%
DPPs are aware of issues relating to the LGB community	12%	31%	57%

Focus group findings

In all the focus groups, only those participants who were connected to gay organisations as workers or as key volunteers, or who worked or had been employed within the statutory sector, were familiar with the role of DPPs. For those who were, there was often confusion about the DPPs' roles and where their work replicated or complemented local Community Safety Partnerships. Despite a lack of knowledge about DPPs, some respondents were keen to be made aware of their existence '*just because we haven't experienced something, doesn't mean it won't affect us one day.*' Others still struggled with the concept within the political context in which policing exists.

Only one participant had applied for an application pack to join a DPP:

*It was like a ***** book, and I hadn't time to do all that, so I didn't bother to fill it in.*

Others had at best an ambivalence and at worst a negative approach to applying:

I think it's a mixture of natural antipathy and hostility for some people like myself.

Reports in the press of homophobic remarks by political appointees to DPPs was a deterrent for some who did not wish to engage with organisations where they would face hostility:

The DPPs are seen as a political forum – so you'd have anti-gay political parties who represent people in particular areas and until homophobia within these parties is addressed, it is not welcoming for gay people to be involved.

If there was a lot of homophobia or I wasn't getting through, it would just feel as though I was wasting my time.

If you're prejudiced against gay people, how can you be impartial and representative of an area?

In order to address this, participants encouraged the development of a more transparent code of conduct and statement of commitment to equality and diversity by DPP members.

Tokenism within DPPs was a deterrent for many potential applicants:

Self-selected gay people do not necessarily speak for the whole gay community and may have their own personal agendas to the fore.

Having been involved in police liaison meetings I would be concerned that the DPPs are yet another talking shop. It seems that they are just party politically dominated and are not particularly proactive with many unimplemented changes being suggested.

Some respondents from Republican areas felt that the lack of political support for the PSNI from Sinn Féin would discourage them from joining DPPs and the pressure from extended family was great:

It doesn't matter what politicians say, I know if I applied to join, I wouldn't be able to live in the Bog any more, and my family and stuff would just not have it from my cousin being killed by a plastic bullet. Nobody turns a word nor mouth to support the police however much they reach out and try to gather information. (Gay female, Derry Londonderry)

Representation on DPPs again raises concerns surrounding not only openness about sexual orientation, but also political and community background. Although there is a responsibility for the NIPB and the PSNI to advance policies, which will gain the confidence and support of the LGB community, social and political issues will influence their success.

Summary

Three-quarters of survey respondents said they had heard of the NIPB. The majority thought that one of the NIPB's major roles is to set policing priorities, and large proportions thought that it also sets policing targets, improves policing and oversees policing by holding the Chief Constable to account. However, about a fifth incorrectly thought that the NIPB tells the police what to do, while a similar proportion said they didn't know what its role is. The great majority thought the NIPB should have openly gay members. Respondents' opinions were divided about whether the NIPB is independent of the police, and many doubted its impartiality. Large percentages of respondents agreed that the NIPB is necessary and that it can help change the police, but for all but two of the questions the largest proportions of responses were in the "Don't know" category. Few respondents were able to make an assessment of the NIPB's relationship with the LGB community, with around two-thirds being unable to say whether it was homophobic, transphobic or aware of the issues relating to the LGB community.

Just under half of survey respondents had heard of District Policing Partnerships (DPPs), although awareness was significantly higher among older respondents and Protestants. Most respondents thought that one of the major roles of DPPs is to oversee policing at a local level, and large proportions thought that they also improve local policing and set local policing priorities. Again there were some misconceptions about the role of DPPs, with small minorities thinking that they tell local police commanders what to do. About one fifth said they did not know what their role is. Three-quarters thought that they should have openly gay members. As with the questions on respondents' perceptions of the NIPB, when asked about their perceptions of DPPs, most respondents' answers fell into the "Don't know" category. Opinions were divided about whether DPPs are impartial, and many respondents thought that they are not representative of their local communities. However, many agreed that DPPs are necessary, that they can help change the police and that they can help make the police more acceptable. Few respondents were able to make an assessment of DPPs' relationships with the LGB community, with two-thirds being unable to say whether DPPs were homophobic or transphobic and almost three-fifths unable to say if DPPs were aware of the issues relating to the LGB community.

7. Police Accountability: the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

7.1 The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

After a review of the complaints system in Northern Ireland, Maurice Hayes (1997) recommended the establishment of a fully independent Police Ombudsman who should take over from the RUC the investigation of all complaints made by members of the public alleging police misconduct. The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI) was established in November 2000, and has in the opinion of many provided a robust system for the independent investigation of complaints against the police (Punch, 2003; Seneviratne, 2004; Wood and Punch, 2004). OPONI (2004a) suggests it has achieved a high public profile, with survey evidence showing there are high levels of public knowledge (85%) and confidence (76%) in the impartiality of the Office (OPONI, 2004a), yet the largest proportion of survey respondents (44% in 2004; OPONI, 2004a) still say that they would go to their local police station in order to make a complaint against the police.

To date there has been no monitoring of the public awareness of OPONI specifically in the LGB community. ICR's findings in relation to those surveyed who are lesbian, gay and bisexual indicate that there are similar levels of awareness of OPONI (see Section 7.2), as to the population generally.

It should be noted, however, that since the opening of OPONI both the numbers and the relative seriousness of complaints made against the police have steadily decreased year upon year (OPONI, 2004c). It should also be noted that OPONI's research suggests that the opinions and attitudes expressed by serving police officers towards the Police Ombudsman are somewhat less than sanguine (OPONI, 2004b).

OPONI monitors the sexual orientation of complainants under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The categories for sexual orientation are homosexual, heterosexual and other. Around 1.5% of

those monitored between November 2000 and February 2005 describe themselves as homosexual (typically fewer than 15 people). A further 3% (20-30 people) describe themselves as 'other'. It is not possible from the data to establish the sexual orientation of this category and it is an assumption to suggest that this may include those who self-describe as bi-sexual. In an interview with ICR the Director of Investigations said:

'I think the Ombudsman's Office must be a market leader in diversity awareness and we've got to actively progress the 'hard to reach groups' and get out there and speak to and listen to them, listen to their concerns and that's the next twelve months. We should be more pro-active instead of waiting for them to come with a complaint...I'm not aware of any complaints from LGB people that have been brought to my attention and I have to ask why?'

New monitoring procedures have been put in place with sexual orientation now categorised as bi-sexual, lesbian, gay, heterosexual, other and 'do not wish to answer' and the OPONI Director of Investigations also noted that he has initiated a new policy whereby any new complaints of this nature are to be passed directly to him.

The use by police officers of homophobic language is not recorded as a separate and distinct allegation category – unlike the use of racist language. Although there is currently no category for recording complaints as 'homophobic', there have been complaints about ineffective and/or slow response rather than the police being accused of being homophobic. OPONI have put procedures in place to flag up any instance where a complainant perceived the slow response of the police to be due to their sexual orientation.

It appears that even very basic training provision for OPONI staff in relation to LGB issues is not yet satisfactory. OPONI's Director of Investigations said that the training for their staff was a key issue. Due to the high profile 'hate crime' stories in the press, he said:

'People must have the confidence if they come to us, that we will deal with these things properlyit's awareness training that we need to have and we need to make sure that diversity is reflected in everything we do. It's a very wide issue and yes we have identified that we have a requirement to develop our staff more in respect of diversity.'

One suggestion raised by a member of OPONI staff who had received training when employed in other organisations in England was that current training should focus more on case studies that draw on personal

experiences. ICR were informed by a spokesperson for OPONI that this issue was to be addressed in future policy developments where training is expected to be more practice-based than theoretical.

7.2 Awareness of the Police Ombudsman – Survey findings

Overall, the majority of respondents (190 or 83%) had heard of the Police Ombudsman; a similar proportion to that found by OPONI in its most recent public awareness survey of the general population (86%; OPONI, 2005). Awareness was significantly higher among older respondents, with over 90% of those aged 26 and over having heard of the Office compared to 69% of 18 to 25 year olds and 50% of those aged under 18; again, this pattern resembles that found in the research carried out by OPONI. Eighty five percent of Protestant respondents had heard of the Office compared to 76% of Catholic respondents and 91% of respondents of all other or no religion; this variation was statistically significant (Pearson Chi-Square = 6.48, df = 2, $p < .05$).

Most respondents knew that one of the major roles of the Police Ombudsman is to investigate complaints against the police made by members of the public (93% of those respondents who had heard of the Police Ombudsman, equivalent to 75% of all respondents; see Table 7.1). Many respondents thought that the Police Ombudsman reports findings to the public (53%) and would help to improve policing (47%). However, just over a third of respondents (34%) mistakenly thought that one of the roles of the Police Ombudsman is to investigate complaints against the police made by other police officers. Fewer respondents thought that the Police Ombudsman has a role in the disciplinary/judicial process, with 24% thinking that she punishes guilty police officers, 21% thinking that she prosecutes police officers and 14% thinking that she manages the police's internal discipline processes. While there was little variation between sub-groups in their responses to these questions, Catholic respondents were less likely than Protestant respondents to think that the role of the Police Ombudsman is to investigate complaints against the police made by members of the public (83% compared to 100%) and more likely to think that the Office prosecutes police officers (30% compared to 13%).

Table 7.1: Respondents' knowledge of the role of the Police Ombudsman

Role of the Police Ombudsman	Number	% of respondents that had heard of the Ombudsman	% of all respondents
To investigate complaints against the police made by the public	174	93%	75%
To report findings to the public	100	53%	43%
To improve policing	89	47%	38%
To investigate complaints against the police made by other police officers	64	34%	27%
To enquire into police policies	61	32%	26%
To punish guilty police officers	45	24%	19%
To prosecute police officers	39	21%	17%
To manage internal discipline within the police	27	14%	12%
To tell the Chief Constable what to do	8	4%	3%
To protect the police from investigation	6	3%	3%
Other	0	-	-
Don't know	3	2%	1%

(Note: Percentages add to more than 100%, as respondents could choose more than one option)

7.3 Perceptions of OPONI

Only 11 respondents had ever contacted OPONI and eight were unhappy with the service they had received. This unhappiness was most frequently related to perceived slowness in service (five respondents; see Table 7.2). One respondent said that the Office's staff displayed homophobic attitudes and another said they displayed transphobic attitudes.

Table 7.2: Respondents' reasons for being unhappy with the service provided by OPONI

Reason	Number
Office didn't follow up the complaint	5
Office was slow to respond	5
Process took a long time	5
Office didn't take complaint seriously	3
Respondent didn't hear back from the Office	3
Office staff displayed homophobic attitudes	1
Office staff displayed transphobic attitudes	1
Office staff were unhelpful	1
Respondent's complaint was dismissed	1

(Note: Numbers add to more than 8 as respondents could choose more than one option)

Respondents were asked a series of 12 questions regarding their perceptions of OPONI. Table 7.3 shows that clear majorities thought that the Office is necessary (74%), can help change the police (55%), make the police more acceptable (55%) and help the police do a good job (51%). Almost half the respondents also agreed that the Office is independent of the police (47%) and that it is impartial (44%). Although there were also large proportions of "Don't know" responses, large proportions of respondents agreed that the Office treats the complainant and the police officer being complained about fairly (46% and 40% respectively). However, very few respondents were able to make an assessment of the Office's relationship with the LGB community, with nearly two-thirds being unable to say whether the Office is homophobic, transphobic or aware of the issues relating to the LGB community (60%, 64% and 66% respectively). However, those respondents who did make a judgement were much less likely to agree that the Office is homophobic (6%) or transphobic (7%) than to disagree (34% and 29% respectively). It should be noted that respondents' answers to this set of questions were not significantly affected by sexual orientation, gender, age or religion.

Table 7.3: Respondents' perceptions of OPONI

Perceptions of OPONI	% of responses		
	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
OPONI is impartial	44%	13%	43%
OPONI will help the police do a good job	51%	11%	38%
OPONI is independent of the police	47%	15%	38%
OPONI treats the public and the police equally	35%	20%	45%
OPONI treats the person complaining fairly	46%	7%	48%
OPONI treats the police officer being investigated fairly	40%	5%	55%
OPONI is necessary	74%	4%	22%
OPONI can help change the police	55%	12%	33%
OPONI can help make the police more acceptable	55%	11%	34%
OPONI is homophobic	6%	34%	60%
OPONI is transphobic	7%	29%	64%
OPONI is aware of issues relating to the LGB community	16%	18%	66%

Focus group findings

Irrespective of age, respondents in the focus groups demonstrated limited familiarity with OPONI. The office's proximity to a number of gay organisations affected their knowledge of its existence, but not its role:

I only know about it from we started coming here, they're round the corner from here. (Gay male, Belfast)

Much of the discussion concerning any knowledge of OPONI was dominated by those who had heard the name in recent news reports concerning the high-profile murder of Robert McCartney with the Ombudsman's agreement to take statements from witnesses. This awareness through high profile cases was also noted in research conducted by Hamilton et al (2003) among young people. There was a sense that while OPONI was a separate body to the PSNI, the likelihood that staff were former police officers or had worked within law enforcement agencies was of concern:

Who works there? I bet they're all police or ex-police.

This perception was also noted in Hamilton et al's research among young people (Hamilton et al, 2003: 69).

Participants in all the focus groups raised the issue that they had experienced insensitive policing in a variety of situations. While it was an issue of deep concern as to how lesbian, gay and bisexual people viewed and were viewed by the police, none of the respondents felt that to complain to OPONI about this would provide them with satisfactory or conclusive responses. The issue of the amount of time to register a complaint, which they felt would be dealt with in an unsatisfactory manner, was a key deterrent:

I think they could do a lot more in terms of their own thinking and have a much more comprehensive approach to dealing with minor complaints and the amount of time it would take out of your life and for what result. (Gay male, Limavady, aged 35)

For those who had previously been arrested and/or convicted, there was a feeling that they had no expectations of fair treatment from the police:

There's manys the time I was handcuffed in the cell, thumped and when I went to complain to the desk sergeant, he didn't want to know. There's plenty of people sees what happens, but if they tries to speak out, they're slammed with a charge for interrupting the police when they're doing their service. So what can you do? I'm not going to let them provoke me and lay into me – of course I'll kick back with my feet to stop myself from falling straight on my face. (Gay male, Derry Londonderry)

Subsequently those who had been accused or had families convicted of crime were unlikely to seek recourse to the Police Ombudsman, believing the system to be unfairly weighted against them:

If you've a history, you're a beaten docket with the police force. Solicitors will tell you this. When they arrested me, they busted my face and I had concussion for 3 days after it and I complained and I wanted my solicitor to take them the whole way, but because I'm on a suspended he advised me that there was no point in going through with it. (Gay male, Derry Londonderry)

Those spoken to, who had made complaints to the Ombudsman, appeared to value aspects of the office that provided personal and face to face support rather than the provision of information through letter, e-mail or phone. Individual investigators were credited with being supportive, sensitive and professional at the initial interviews, but the

time taken by OPONI to conduct its investigations and enquiries was raised in two focus groups:

Initially their concern seemed genuine, I was very happy with their attitude, but the whole thing dragged on and on. Standard letters kept coming saying nothing, and after a year I got a final letter to say that they had found no case against the officer under investigation and I never saw anyone after the first meeting. I was so angry. The procedure was not honourable. They should at the very least have come back to me in person to explain how and why the case was resolved and closed. (Bi-sexual female, Belfast)

Evidence during this research would indicate a growing awareness in OPONI of the important role they have in gaining the confidence of the LGB community. As with reporting an incident to the PSNI, the need to feel the complaint is being taken seriously and being kept informed is important in the perception of the organisation despite the outcome.

7.4 Complaining about the police

Respondents were asked where they would go first of all if they wanted to make a complaint against the police. Table 7.4 shows that the largest proportion of respondents (24%) said they would go to their local police station to make a complaint. A further 18% said they would go to an LGBT representative group. Fifteen percent said they would go to the Police Ombudsman; this represents just 18% of those respondents who said that they were aware of the Office. Catholic respondents were less likely than Protestant respondents to say that they would go to their local police station to make a complaint (12% compared to 33%), and more likely to say they would go to a solicitor (16% compared to 6%); apart from that, there were no significant variations in responses to this question according to sexual orientation, gender or age.

Table 7.4: Where respondents would go to make a complaint against the police

Location	Number	%
Local police station	53	24%
LGBT representative group	40	18%
Police Ombudsman	35	15%
Solicitor	26	12%
The Chief Constable	15	7%
MP/MLA/Councillor	11	5%
Citizen's Advice Bureau	10	4%
Community Advice centre	5	2%
Policing Board	4	2%
Political party office	4	2%
Priest/minister/religious leader	2	1%
School teacher/Youth worker	1	0%
Social worker	1	0%
Other	1	0%
Don't know	16	7%
Total (excludes missing responses)	224	100%

It is interesting to note that research carried out by OPONI also found that survey respondents are more likely to say that they would go to their local police station to make a complaint than to say that they would go anywhere else: 52% said they would go to a police station, 16% to a solicitor and 11% to the Police Ombudsman's Office (OPONI, 2005). However, in the actual event of making a complaint, it appears that most complainants in fact choose to contact the Police Ombudsman's Office first rather than go to a police station (OPONI, 2005).

Summary

The great majority of survey respondents said they had heard of the Police Ombudsman, although awareness was lower among younger respondents and Catholic respondents. Nearly all knew that one of the major roles of OPONI is to investigate complaints against the police made by members of the public; large proportions knew that OPONI reports findings to the public and thought that it would help to improve policing. However, a third of respondents incorrectly thought that one of the roles of OPONI is to investigate complaints against the police made by fellow police officers. Slightly smaller proportions thought that OPONI has a role in the disciplinary/judicial process, with a quarter thinking that it punishes guilty police officers, a fifth thinking that it

prosecutes police officers and one in seven thinking that it manages the police's internal discipline processes.

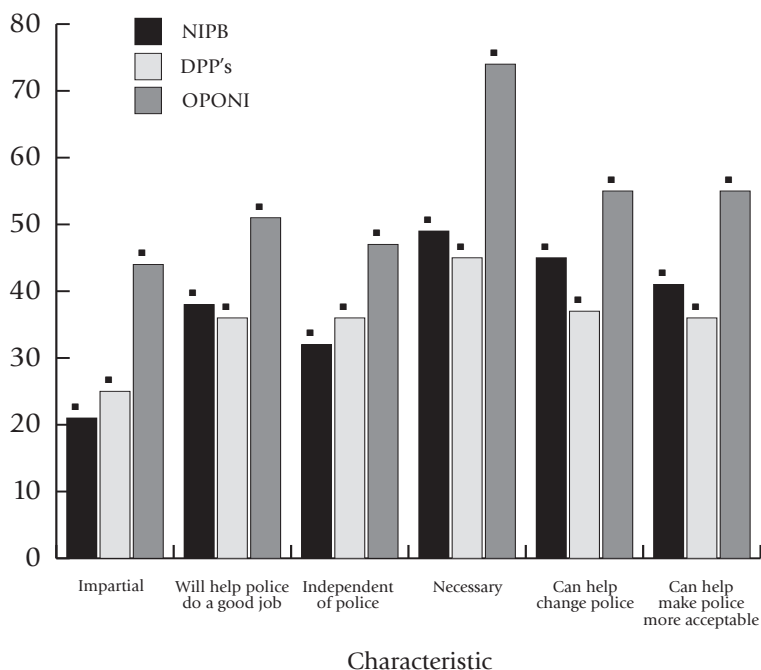
Only 11 respondents had ever contacted OPONI, and eight of these were unhappy with the service they had received. This unhappiness was most frequently related to perceived slowness in service, although one respondent said OPONI staff displayed homophobic attitudes and another said they displayed transphobic attitudes. Clear majorities thought that OPONI is necessary, can help change the police, make them more acceptable and help the police do a good job. Large proportions agreed that OPONI is impartial, that it is independent of the police and that it treats the complainant and the police officer being complained about fairly. Few respondents were able to make an assessment of whether OPONI was homophobic, transphobic or aware of the issues relating to the LGB community.

When asked where they would go first of all if they wanted to make a complaint against the police, a quarter of survey respondents said they would go to their local police station and a fifth said they would go to an LGBT representative group. About one in seven said they would go to OPONI.

8. A comparison of the organisations forming part of the new policing arrangements in Northern Ireland

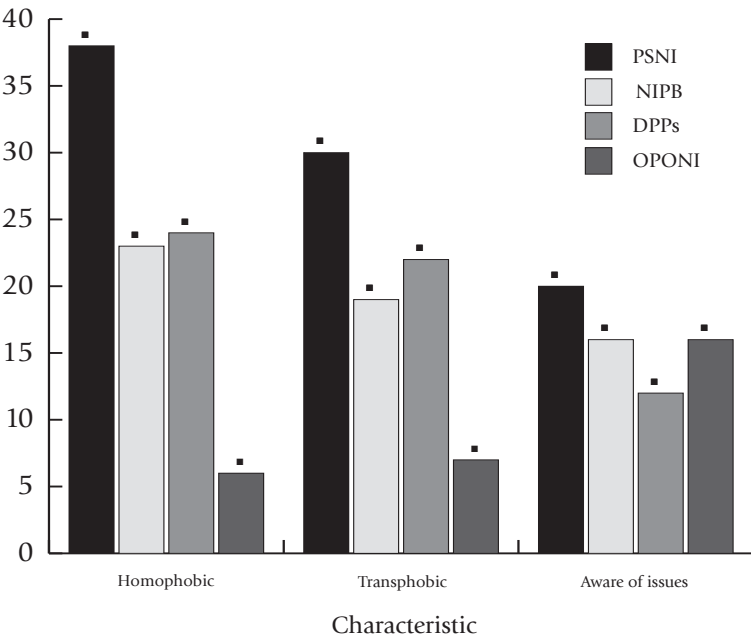
A comparison of respondents' attitudes to the policing organisations that they were questioned about reveals that OPONI generally received the most positive responses (see Figure 8.1). Thus, when compared to the NIPB and DPPs, larger proportions of respondents thought that OPONI is impartial; will help the police do a good job; is independent; is necessary; can help change the police; and can help make the police more acceptable. It should be noted that a high percentage of respondents answered 'Don't know' in relation to their perceptions of the policing organisations (see NIPB Table 6.2, DPP Table 6.4 and OPONI Table 7.3).

Figure 8.1: Respondents' attitudes to NIPB, DPPs and OPONI



Comparing respondents' views on the relationships between all four organisations and the LGB community, Figure 8.2 shows that respondents were more likely to agree that the PSNI is homophobic and transphobic than they were to express this view about the three other organisations. OPONI was perceived as the least homophobic and transphobic of the four. However, respondents agreed that the PSNI was the organisation most aware of LGB issues.

Figure 8.2: Respondents' perceptions of the attitudes of the PSNI, NIPB, DPPs and OPONI



Summary

It is clear that the policing organisations are aware of the need to address the issue of homophobic crime and are taking action to do so. In order for strategies to be effective, the co-operation of the LGB population and confidence in the service they will receive needs to be built. However, homophobia displayed in public statements by elected members of the NIPB and a DPP has detracted somewhat from any such attempts. There are currently no independent members of the NIPB or DPPs representing the LGB community.

The LGB population, in common with the general population, focuses on the behaviour of the PSNI and shows less awareness of the NIPB, DPPs and OPONI. Those who were aware of the roles of the different organisations showed a lack of confidence in their impartiality. This was particularly true for the NIPB and DPPs, mainly due to the political representation on these bodies.

Conclusion

Section 75 and various pieces of equality legislation mean that Northern Ireland is at the forefront in addressing the issue of 'difference'. While statutory and public bodies are struggling to comply with recent equality legislation, the reporting of homophobic incidents is increasing in response to the growing diversity and visibility of the LGB community.

The various policing organisations in Northern Ireland have a key role in addressing not only the criminal issues involved in 'homophobic crime', but also the social attitudes that allow prejudice and hatred to flourish in Northern Ireland. As an employer, the PSNI has to address homophobia within its ranks. However, unlike other employers, it also has to attempt to win the confidence of the LGB community in order to allow it to effectively police 'hate crime'.

The PSNI faces several problems. It has a responsibility as an employer, as protector of the LGB population as part of the general population and is charged with enforcing the law. However, the PSNI is not divorced from general public opinion. Its officers are members of and representative of the society they police, as are members of the NIPB and DPPs, and there are many contradictions in the messages that society receives in relation to homosexuality. This in no way excuses the display of homophobic attitudes by police officers or members of policing organisations. There may be those who would argue that members of the PSNI and policing organisations who display homophobic attitudes are simply representative of sections of Northern Ireland society. However, these members and organisations bear the responsibility to protect others from violence, therefore a display of prejudice on their part is inexcusable.

The rise in reports of homophobic crime has demonstrated that this growing problem cannot be ignored. CoSO states that a factor compounding the issue is the lack of resources available to support organisations within the LGB community to deal with homophobia. CoSO argues that organisations such as the NIPB and PSNI, who show a willingness to move forward in tackling the issue of homophobia, are relying on other organisations who have little or no resources to help them and this issue cannot be sidetracked.

The PSNI, NIPB and OPONI have shown a commitment to initiate policies and practices to address the problem. It is clear that these policies will need to be backed by actions to deal with homophobia within the ranks of PSNI, NIPB and DPPs. Without this, the public face of policing will still be seen to endorse a prejudice that manifests itself in violence against a particular section of the community it is there to protect.

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Appendix 1:

Questionnaire: LGB people and policing

This is a survey designed to assess the attitudes of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual individuals towards the Police Service for Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the District Policing Partnerships and the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

Please read the following questions carefully and answer according to your own experience.

The survey has been designed by the Institute for Conflict Research and is funded by NIPB and OPONI.

Please note that all your answers to these questions will be treated as confidential

1. How old are you?

☐ Under 18

☐ 18-25

☐ 26-35

☐ 36-50

☐ 51-65

☐ Over 65

2. Are you:

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Trans (pre- or post-op)

3. Are you a parent, a step-parent or a co-parent?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Where do you live? – please write in the first half of your postcode (for example BT95): BT

5. How would you describe your current sexual orientation? (tick one)

☐ Bisexual

☐ Gay male

☐ Lesbian

☐ Gay female

☐ Unsure

6. In terms of your religion, are you: (tick one)

☐ Baha'i

☐ Buddhist

☐ Catholic

☐ Hindu

☐ Jewish

☐ Muslim

☐ Protestant

☐ Orthodox (Greek/Russian/Armenian)

☐ Sikh

☐ Other Christian

☐ None

☐ Other (please state) _____

7. How do you perceive your ethnic background: (tick one)
- ☐ Arabic (North African/Saudi/Gulf States, UAE)
 - ☐ Black African
 - ☐ Black Caribbean
 - ☐ Chinese
 - ☐ Far-East (Malay, Japanese, Thai, Filipino)
 - ☐ Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Sri Lankan
 - ☐ Irish Traveller
 - ☐ Latin American
 - ☐ Near-East (Turkish, Syrian, Iranian, Israeli)
 - ☐ White
 - ☐ Mixed ethnic group (please state)_____
 - ☐ Other (please state)_____
8. Are you currently: (tick one)
- ☐ At school
 - ☐ At college (full-time)
 - ☐ At university (full-time)
 - ☐ Working (full- or part-time)
 - ☐ In full time training
 - ☐ Unemployed
 - ☐ Full-time carer for family/other dependents
 - ☐ Unable to work because of illness
 - ☐ Retired
 - ☐ Other (please state)_____
9. Have you been the victim of a crime in the past 12 months?
- ☐ Yes (now go to Question 10)
 - ☐ No (now go to Question 14)
10. Do you think that any of the crime that you've been a victim of in the last 12 months was motivated by homophobia?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know
11. Did you report the crime to the police? (If you've been the victim of more than one crime, please think about the most recent one)
- ☐ Yes (now go to Question 12)
 - ☐ No (now go to Question 13)

12. Overall, how satisfied were you with how the police dealt with the crime?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ Can't say

Now go to Question 14

13. Why didn't you report this crime to the police? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ You didn't want the police to know your sexual orientation
- ☐ You didn't want anyone to know your sexual orientation
- ☐ You thought the police would ignore you because of your sexual orientation
- ☐ You thought the police would be hostile to you because of your sexual orientation
- ☐ You didn't want the police to know your trans status
- ☐ You didn't want anyone to know your trans status
- ☐ You thought the police would ignore you because of your trans status
- ☐ You thought the police would be hostile to you because of your trans status
- ☐ You were scared of being outed
- ☐ You were worried about the impact upon your family
- ☐ You felt the police couldn't help
- ☐ You felt the police wouldn't be interested
- ☐ You'd had poor experience of the police previously
- ☐ Other people in your community discouraged you
- ☐ You don't support the current policing system here
- ☐ You were scared of provoking reprisal
- ☐ It was a private/personal/family matter
- ☐ You were too upset
- ☐ The incident was too trivial
- ☐ Other (please state) _____

14. Have you had any contact with the police in the past 12 months?

- ☐ Yes (now go to Question 15)
- ☐ No (now go to Question 16)

15. What form did this contact take? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ You reported a crime
- ☐ You witnessed a crime
- ☐ You were required to produce your driving documents
- ☐ You were accused of committing a crime
- ☐ You were stopped and questioned
- ☐ You were asked to move on
- ☐ You asked for some information
- ☐ You were involved in a traffic accident
- ☐ You are or are related to a police officer
- ☐ You work for or with the police
- ☐ Other (please state) _____

16. Have you ever experienced any problems with the police?

- ☐ Yes (now go to Question 17)
- ☐ No (now go to Question 22)

17. When did you last experience these problems?

- ☐ Within the last year
- ☐ Between 1 and 3 years ago
- ☐ Between 3 and 5 years ago
- ☐ More than 5 years ago
- ☐ Don't know / can't remember

18. What types of problem have you experienced? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ The police's service was unsatisfactory
- ☐ The police refused to help you
- ☐ The police didn't follow up a call you made
- ☐ The police didn't keep you informed about progress
- ☐ The police didn't take you seriously
- ☐ An officer was rude or impolite to you
- ☐ The police harassed you
- ☐ The police did not follow proper procedures
- ☐ The police stopped or searched you without reason
- ☐ Discrimination because of your ethnic origin
- ☐ Discrimination because of your sexual orientation
- ☐ Discrimination because of your trans status

- ☐ Discrimination because of other grounds
- ☐ An officer used homophobic language to you
- ☐ An officer used transphobic language to you
- ☐ An officer used sectarian language to you
- ☐ An officer used racist language to you
- ☐ An officer used sexist language to you
- ☐ The police wrongly accused you of misbehaviour
- ☐ The police behaved violently to you
- ☐ The police did not carry out their duty properly
- ☐ The police searched your house without reason
- ☐ The police took an item of your property
- ☐ Other (please state) _____

19. Did you make a complaint about any of these incidents?

- ☐ Yes (now go to Question 20)
- ☐ No (now go to Question 21)

20. Who did you go to first about your complaint? (If you've made more than one complaint, please describe the most recent)

- ☐ Chief Constable
- ☐ Citizen's Advice Bureau
- ☐ Community Advice centre
- ☐ Independent Commission for Police Complaints
- ☐ LGBT representative group
- ☐ Local police station
- ☐ Local priest/minister/religious leader
- ☐ MP/MLA/Councillor
- ☐ Police Ombudsman
- ☐ Policing Board
- ☐ Political party offices
- ☐ School teacher/Youth worker
- ☐ Social worker
- ☐ Solicitor
- ☐ Other (please state) _____

Now go to Question 22

21. If you've had problems with the police but chose not to complain, why didn't you do so? (tick all that apply)
- ☐ You thought nothing would be done about it
 - ☐ The incident wasn't serious enough
 - ☐ You couldn't be bothered
 - ☐ You were scared of police reprisals
 - ☐ You didn't want to make trouble for the police
 - ☐ You didn't know how to complain
 - ☐ Other people in your community discouraged you
 - ☐ You don't support the current policing system here
 - ☐ You didn't know who to complain to
 - ☐ You were scared of being outed
 - ☐ You were worried about the impact upon your family
 - ☐ You didn't want anyone to know your sexual orientation
 - ☐ You thought your complaint would be disregarded because of your sexual orientation
 - ☐ You didn't want anyone to know about your trans status
 - ☐ You thought your complaint would be disregarded because of your trans status
 - ☐ Other (please state) _____
22. Please tick 3 priority activities that you think the police should be concentrating on. (tick three only)
- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Assaults | ☐ Community education/training |
| ☐ Car crime | ☐ Community safety |
| ☐ Drug dealing | ☐ Crime prevention |
| ☐ Drug use | ☐ Domestic violence |
| ☐ Muggings | ☐ Homophobic crime |
| ☐ Burglary | ☐ Organised crime/racketeering |
| ☐ Public disorder | ☐ Paramilitary activity |
| ☐ Racist crime | ☐ Road traffic policing |
| ☐ Sectarian crime | ☐ Trans-phobic crime |
| ☐ Responding promptly to emergencies | |
| ☐ Religious hate crime (e.g. Islamophobic) | |
| ☐ Other (please state) _____ | |

23. Overall, do you think the police:

Are honest ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are professional ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are helpful ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are fair ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are there for your protection
 ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are acceptable ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Have improved since the RUC became the PSNI
 ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are homophobic ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are transphobic ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are aware of issues relating to the LGBT community
 ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

24. Have you heard of the Police Ombudsman?

☐ Yes (now go to Question 25)

☐ No (now go to Question 30)

25. What do you think the role of the Police Ombudsman is?
(tick all that apply)

☐ To investigate complaints against the police made by the public

☐ To investigate complaints against the police made by other police officers

☐ To protect the police from investigation

☐ To prosecute police officers

☐ To punish guilty police officers

☐ To report findings to the public

☐ To manage internal discipline within the police

- ☐ To tell the Chief Constable what to do
- ☐ To enquire into police policies
- ☐ To improve policing
- ☐ Other (please state)_____
- ☐ Don't know

26. Have you ever contacted the Police Ombudsman's Office?

- ☐ Yes (now go to Question 27)
- ☐ No (now go to Question 29)

27. Were you happy with the service you received when you contacted the Police Ombudsman's Office?

- ☐ Yes (now go to Question 29)
- ☐ No (now go to Question 28)

28. Why were you not happy with the service you received?
(tick all that apply)

- ☐ The Office was slow to respond
- ☐ The process took a long time
- ☐ The Office didn't take your complaint seriously
- ☐ You didn't hear anything after making your complaint
- ☐ The Office didn't follow up your complaint
- ☐ The information you asked for was not supplied
- ☐ Your complaint was dismissed
- ☐ The Office staff weren't helpful
- ☐ The Office staff displayed homophobic attitudes
- ☐ The Office staff displayed transphobic attitudes
- ☐ Other (please state)_____

29. Overall, do you think the Police Ombudsman's Office:

Is impartial ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Will help the police do a good job

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Is independent of the police

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Treats the public and the police equally

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Treats the person complaining fairly

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Treats the police officer being investigated fairly

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Is necessary

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Can help change the police

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Can help make the police more acceptable

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Is homophobic

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Is transphobic

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Is aware of issues relating to the LGBT community

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

30. If you wanted to make a complaint about the police, where would be the first place you would go to do this? (tick one)

☐ To the Chief Constable

☐ To a Citizen's Advice Bureau

☐ To a Community Advice centre

☐ To a LGBT representative group

☐ To your Local police station

☐ To your local priest/minister/religious leader

☐ To your MP/MLA/Councillor

☐ To the Police Ombudsman

☐ To the Policing Board

☐ To a Political party office

☐ To a school teacher/Youth worker

☐ To a social worker

☐ To a solicitor

- ☐ Don't know
☐ Somewhere else (please state)

31. Have you heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board?

- ☐ Yes (now go to Question 32)
☐ No (now go to Question 35)

32. What do you think the role of the Policing Board is? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ To tell the police what to do
☐ To tell the Chief Constable what to do
☐ To set policing priorities
☐ To set policing targets
☐ To control police spending
☐ To oversee policing by holding the Chief Constable to account
☐ To investigate complaints against the police made by the public
☐ To inform the public about policing issues
☐ To enquire into police policies
☐ To improve policing
☐ Other (please state) _____
☐ Don't know

33. Do you think that there should be openly LGBT Members on the Policing Board?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Doesn't matter one way or the other
☐ Don't know

34. Overall, do you think the Policing Board:

Is impartial ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Will help the police do a good job

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Is independent of the police

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Has made policing more effective

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Is necessary

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Can help change the police

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Can help make the police more acceptable

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Is homophobic

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are transphobic

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Is aware of issues relating to the LGBT community

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

35. Have you heard of District Policing Partnerships (DPPs)?

☐ Yes (now go to Question 36)

☐ No (now go to Question 39)

36. What do you think the role of the DPPs is? (tick all that apply)

☐ To tell the local police what to do

☐ To tell the District Commander what to do

☐ To oversee policing at a local level

☐ To set local policing priorities

☐ To set local policing targets

☐ To investigate complaints against the police

☐ To inform the public about local policing issues

☐ To enquire into local police policies

☐ To improve local policing

☐ Other (please state)_____

☐ Don't know

37. Do you think that there should be openly LGBT Members on all the DPPs?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Doesn't matter one way or the other
☐ Don't know

38. Overall, do you think the DPPs:

Are impartial ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Will help the police do a good job
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are independent of the police
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Have made policing more effective
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are representative of their local communities
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are necessary ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Can help change the police
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Can help make the police more acceptable
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are homophobic ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are transphobic ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Are aware of issues relating to the LGBT community
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

39. Would you consider joining the police service?

- ☐ Yes (The end!)
☐ No (now go to Question 40)

40. Why wouldn't you consider joining the police service?
(tick all that apply)

- ☐ You wouldn't be chosen because of your sexual orientation
- ☐ You wouldn't be treated well in the police because of your sexual orientation
- ☐ You wouldn't be chosen because of your religion
- ☐ You wouldn't be treated well in the police because of your religion
- ☐ You wouldn't be chosen because of your trans status
- ☐ You wouldn't be treated well in the police because of your trans status
- ☐ You wouldn't be chosen because of your ethnic origin
- ☐ You wouldn't be treated well in the police because of your ethnic origin
- ☐ Your family/friends wouldn't approve
- ☐ You'd fear attack on yourself
- ☐ You'd fear attack on your family
- ☐ You wouldn't be able to maintain contact with your family and friends
- ☐ Poor pay and working conditions in the police
- ☐ You don't support the police
- ☐ Because of your age (too old or too young)
- ☐ Because of your gender
- ☐ Other (please state) _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

The ICR is an independent research organisation and a recognised charity.

If you would like more information about this project or the work of the ICR please contact us on (028) 9074 2682 or at www.conflictresearch.org.uk

Appendix 2:

Focus Group Discussion Themes

- Areas group members are from and whether their experience of 'homophobia' differs in relation to a rural or urban environment.

Experiences of policing:

- Non-confrontational, for example family or friends who are or have been police officers.
- Experiences of police providing advice, help or protection.
- Victim of a homophobic incident or crime?
- Willingness to report homophobic incidents/crimes to the police.
- Where political opinion affects attitude toward police – is police protection from 'hate crime' more important?
- Treatment from the police when reporting homophobic incidents/crimes.
- Experiences of what was perceived as inappropriate language/behaviour of police officers in relation to sexual orientation.
- Illegal activities such as 'cottaging' in LGB community.
- Visibility of policing among LGB community – protection or harassment?
- LGB community and domestic violence.
- LGB input to training of police.
- Positive changes in policing the LGB population they would like to see.

NIPB

- Awareness of existence and role.
- Representation on NIPB.

DPPs:

- Awareness of existence and role of DPPs.
- Usefulness of DPPs.
- Applying to join a DPP.

OPONI:

- Complaining about negative policing experiences.
- Awareness of the existence and role of OPONI and willingness to use OPONI's services.
- Satisfaction with services offered by OPONI.

Policing Organisations:

- Training of staff in policing organisations.

ICR REPORTS

The following is a list of the most recent research reports that have been produced by ICR. Wherever possible reports are made available on our website, some however remain the property of the commissioning body and are retained as internal documents. A full list of reports, papers and articles can be found on our website.

Troubled Youth? Young People, Violence and Disorder in Northern Ireland. Ulf Hansson, (2005) Funded by EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation.

Interface Violence in East Belfast during 2002: The impact on residents of Short Strand and Inner East Belfast. Jonny Byrne, (2005) Funded by EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation.

Interface Issues: An Annotated Bibliography. Mary Conway and Jonny Byrne, (2005) Commissioned by Belfast Interface Project.

New Migrant Communities in East Tyrone. Jennifer Betts and Jennifer Hamilton, (2005) Commissioned by East Tyrone College of Further and Higher Education.

No Longer a Problem? Sectarian Violence in Northern Ireland. Neil Jarman, (2005) Commissioned by Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Ballysillan Residents' Attitudes towards Church Participation, Community Involvement and Neighbourhood Safety. Mary Conway, (2005). Ballysillan Bridgebuilding Forum and ICR.

Young People's Attitudes and Experiences of Policing, Violence and Community Safety in North Belfast. Jonny Byrne, Mary Conway and Malcolm Ostermeyer, (2005). Commissioned by the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

Young People in Community Conflict. Jonny Byrne, Jennifer Hamilton and Ulf Hansson, (2005). Commissioned by Northern Health and Social Services Board.

Sectarian and Racist Chill Factors in Armagh College. Jennifer Hamilton, (2005). Commissioned by Armagh College of Further and Higher Education.

Community Cohesion: Applying Learning from Groundwork in Northern Ireland. Neil Jarman, Libby Keyes, Jenny Pearce and Derick Wilson, (2004) Commissioned by Groundwork UK.

Sectarianism in Armagh City and District Council Area. Jennifer Hamilton, (2004) Commissioned by Community Relations Council.

Out of Sight: Young People and Paramilitary Exiling in Northern Ireland. Jonny Byrne, (2004). Commissioned by Save the Children and NIACRO.

Report on the Consultation about proposals for a Chinese Community Centre on Donegall Pass, Belfast. Neil Jarman, (2004). Commissioned by Belfast City Council.

Community Relations, Community Cohesion and Regeneration: A training and development strategy for Groundwork Northern Ireland. Neil Jarman and Paul Hutchinson, (2004). Commissioned by Groundwork NI.

Young People in the Greater Shantallow Area. Ulf Hansson, (2004). Off the Streets and ICR.

Sectarianism in the Limavady Borough Council Area. Jonny Byrne, (2004). Commissioned by Community Relations Council.

Mediation Northern Ireland Policing Project: Interim Evaluation. Neil Jarman, (2004). Commissioned by Mediation Northern Ireland.

Demography, Development and Disorder: Changing Patterns of Interface Areas. Neil Jarman, (2004). Commissioned by Community Relations Council.

Crime–A Waste of Time. Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Sunningdale. Fabrice Murlon and Ulf Hansson, (2004). North Belfast Alternatives and ICR.

Evaluation Report of Diversity Challenges. Ruth Moore, Brandon Hamber and Neil Jarman, (2004). Commissioned by Diversity Challenges.

Sectarianism in the Antrim Borough Council Area. Jonny Byrne, (2004). Commissioned by Community Relations Council.

Sectarianism in the Larne District Council Area. Jonny Byrne, (2004). Commissioned by Community Relations Council.

Legislative Provisions for Hate Crime across EU Member States. Rebecca Thomas, (2004). ICR.

Migrant Workers in Northern Ireland. Kathryn Bell, Neil Jarman and Thomas Lefebvre, (2004). Commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Racist Harassment in Northern Ireland. Neil Jarman and Rachel Monaghan, (2004). Commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Young People's Attitudes and Experiences of Sectarianism and Community Conflict in Larne. Jonny Byrne, (2004). Commissioned by YMCA.

The Impact of Political Conflict on Children in Northern Ireland. Marie Smyth with Marie Therese Fay, Emily Brough and Jennifer Hamilton, (2004). ICR.

A Review of the Health and Social Care Needs of Victims/Survivors of the Northern Ireland Conflict. Jennifer Hamilton, Jonny Byrne and Neil Jarman, (2003). Commissioned by Eastern Health and Social Services Board.

An Acceptable Prejudice? Homophobic Violence and Harassment in Northern Ireland. Neil Jarman and Alex Tennant, (2003). Commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Young People and Politics. North Belfast Community Research Group, (2003). LINC Resource Centre and ICR.

Policing, Accountability and Young People. Jennifer Hamilton, Katy Radford and Neil Jarman, (2003). Commissioned by Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Policing Board.

Analysis of Incidents of Racial Harassment Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland. Neil Jarman and Rachel Monaghan, (2003). Commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Human Rights and Community Relations: Competing or Complimentary Approaches in Response to Conflict? Neil Jarman (ed), (2002). ICR.

The Human Impact of the Troubles on Housing Provision and Policy. Jennifer Hamilton, Rachel Monaghan and Marie Smyth, (2002). Commissioned by Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Creggan Community Restorative Justice: An Evaluation and Suggested Way Forward. Marie Smyth, Jennifer Hamilton and Kirsten Thomson, (2002). ICR and St Columb's Park House.

Caring Through the Troubles: Health and Social Services in North and West Belfast. Marie Smyth, Mike Morrissey and Jennifer Hamilton, (2001). Commissioned by North and West Health and Social Services Board.

Reviewing REAL Provision: An Evaluation of Provision and Support for People Affected by the Northern Ireland Troubles. Jennifer Hamilton, Kirsten Thomson and Marie Smyth, (2001). Commissioned by Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust.



This report draws on the findings of a survey of 233 people from the lesbian, gay and bisexual population in Northern Ireland, discussions with groups and individual interviews with key personnel involved in the policing structures in Northern Ireland. The report explores the attitudes of the lesbian, gay and bisexual population to policing structures in Northern Ireland and their awareness of the roles of the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. The research was commissioned by the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.



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£5

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