



Northern
Ireland
Office

Summary of responses to

TOGETHER. STRONGER. SAFER.

Community Safety in Northern Ireland Consultation

July 2009

Index

- 3. Introduction
- 6. Strategy Themes
- 8. Creating Safer Neighbourhoods
- 16. Focus on families and young people
- 21. Building Strong, Confident Communities
- 28. Delivery
- 30. Equality Implications
- 32. List of Respondents - Annex A

Introduction

In October 2008, the Community Safety Unit of the Northern Ireland Office published a consultation document on Community Safety in Northern Ireland entitled 'Together. Stronger. Safer.' The consultation document provided an opportunity for people to comment on government proposals for the development of community safety over the next five years. The document contained three cross-cutting themes:

1. Creating safer neighbourhoods
2. Focus on families and young people
3. Building strong, confident communities

Respondents were asked to comment on questions relating to each theme.

The initial 12 week consultation period was extended to facilitate stakeholders, and closed on 19 February 2009. A total of 86 responses were received. During the consultation period the Community Safety Unit was invited to present on the proposals by a number of organisations.

The responses received were categorised as follows:

Sector	Number of Responses
Councils	9
Community Safety Partnerships	17
District Policing Partnerships	4
Government/ Statutory Agencies	14
Voluntaries/Charities	36
Political Parties	3
Others	3
Total	86

This document provides a summary of the diverse range of views expressed during the consultation process along with the key themes which emerged as a result of this process. It outlines our proposals based on what was learnt from the consultation.

In addition to the specific responses to the questions posed in our consultation we noted that a number of respondents were of the view that a finalised community safety strategy should not be published in advance of the devolution of policing and justice. Such respondents expressed the view it was the responsibility of all departments to address the issue of community safety and that a community safety strategy should be delivered by a devolved Minister in conjunction with Executive colleagues.

It is evident from all that we have heard that further engagement with relevant stakeholders will be required before a community safety strategy can be finalised. We propose to continue to examine the different strands of the strategy through such engagement. This will allow us to be in a position to provide the Minister responsible for Community Safety with advice on proposals which have been shaped by a comprehensive range of local opinions. The Action Plan which supports this document sets out the time frame and nature of that work.

We aim to have the final strategy ready for publication by 31 December 2009.
Printed copies of this response may be obtained free of charge from:

Strategy Consultation
Community Safety Unit
Northern Ireland Office
4th Floor Millennium House
Great Victoria Street
Belfast
BT2 7AQ

Email: csuconsultation@nio.x.gsi.gov.uk

Fax number: 02890 828556

Text phone: 02890 527668

You may make additional copies of this response without seeking permission. Copies of this document in other formats may also be made available on request. Please contact us and we will do our best to assist you.

If you have any concerns or complaints about the consultation process you should contact NIO's co-ordinator, Donna Knowles on 02890 527 015, by e-mail Donna.Knowles@nio.x.gsi.gov.uk , or by post:

Donna Knowles
Central Management Unit
Northern Ireland Office
Stormont House Annexe
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SH

Finally, the Community Safety Unit would like to thank all of those who took time to provide a response to this consultation. Your contribution has been of great assistance in formulating a way forward.

Strategy Themes

The three themes of the strategy are: Creating safer neighbourhoods, Focus on families and young people and Building strong, confident communities.

Q1. Are the 3 proposed themes, the correct ones?

Views expressed

Responses were largely accepting of the three themes suggested in the consultation document. Most respondents commented that the broad definitions would allow a flexible approach to be adopted in the delivery of the strategy. Those respondents who disagreed with the suggested themes did so for a variety of reasons. This included the view that the consultation should have been more closely aligned with the nine areas of interest contained within the 2003 Community Safety Strategy, thereby creating a sense of continuity between both strategies.

Some respondents expressed disappointment that the strategy had not adequately reflected the work of their organisations or accurately represented their constituents. In particular, these concerns were centred on the second theme of the strategy 'Focus on Families and Young People'. Views were expressed by a number of organisations, including those who represent children and young people, that this strand of the strategy portrayed young people as the major cause of crime and anti-social behaviour. They suggested that the tone of the document added to negative perceptions of young people and felt that it could have the potential to demonise young people.

Groups representing older people were disappointed that the strategy did not contain a separate strand for older people and also expressed their disappointment and frustration at the delay in the development of a strategy for this section of the community. They commented that their only reference in the document was to older people being a 'vulnerable group' and questioned

why there was a focus on families and young people, but no mention of older people. Similarly, other respondents questioned this theme and suggested there was a need to highlight domestic violence, increase actions to address hate crime, and to expand the remit of the theme to include sex offenders and other prolific offenders.

NIO Response

As outlined in the introduction to this document, we propose to continue to examine the different strands of the strategy through engagement with all stakeholders. This will allow us to be in a position to provide the Minister with responsibility for Community Safety with advice on proposals which have been shaped by a comprehensive range of local opinions. We aim to have the final strategy ready for publication by 31 December 2009.

Creating Safer Neighbourhoods

The purpose of this theme is that people should be safe, and feel safe, in their homes, neighbourhoods and town centres. That feeling can be enhanced by dealing with seemingly minor issues such as graffiti, or litter, as well as the more obviously anti-social or criminal behaviour. Environmental improvements can also assist in creating safer neighbourhoods. Our proposals to achieve this include:

- improving powers to deal with the seizure of vehicles used anti-socially; closure of premises causing a significant, persistent and serious nuisance
- improving the environment – physical improvement schemes and improved powers of enforcement to deal with graffiti, litter, fly-posting etc
- working with others to manage the night-time economy in town and city centres; possibly also legislation to introduce business improvement districts.

Q2. Are the powers proposed appropriate?

Views expressed

Respondents welcomed the proposals which related to information-sharing and noise-nuisance however we received contradictory views in relation to proposals to introduce dispersal/ disorder zones. This is expanded upon below.

New Powers

The introduction of statutory measures to allow the sharing of information for the purpose of preventing, detecting, or responding to crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour was seen by the majority of respondents as a positive step which would strengthen partnership working. Some concerns were, however, expressed regarding the protection of personal information.

Respondents commented that if legislation was introduced to allow the closure of premises which were causing a significant, persistent and serious nuisance then it should contain a provision on closure notices and closure orders, similar to those contained in the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act

2008. It was suggested that there should also be an appropriate appeals mechanism.

Noise Nuisance

It was acknowledged that measures were required to tackle the problem of noise nuisance. Respondents said this was an issue which can be extremely problematic. Statutory provisions are available for dealing with this issue, (Noise Act 1996) but, to date, only Belfast City Council appears to have adopted these provisions. Respondents indicated that the main restriction to adopting these provisions were cost implications. It was suggested that a joined-up approach to enforcement may be a more effective way of dealing with this issue.

Dispersal/ Disorder Zones

Respondents to this proposal fell into three categories:

1. those who considered this measure to be a helpful addition for dealing with the problem of anti social behaviour at a local level;
2. those who could see the rationale for dispersal zones, but had concerns they would be used disproportionately against young people and were unable to support this proposal until further details were provided. These respondents wanted to know how these powers would be exercised or challenged and if stringent guidance would be in place to prevent these powers being used in a discriminatory way against young people; and
3. those who were opposed to the proposals basing their objections on a number of grounds including the fact that:
 - they discriminated against children and young people;
 - they would adversely impact on the freedom of the individual;
 - they would deny the right to assemble;
 - they could lead to criminalisation of young people for behaviour that was not characterised as criminal; and
 - proposals were not in keeping with Human Rights and equality legislation.

NIO Response

New powers

We will screen proposals to introduce legislation similar to powers contained in section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which allows the disclosure of information to a relevant authority for the purposes of preventing, detecting or responding to crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. Within this process we shall seek views on the development of protocols to safeguard personal information. We will also screen proposals to introduce legislation, similar to those in the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, to close premises which are causing significant, persistent and serious nuisance to local communities.

Noise Nuisance

We accept that noise nuisance can be problematic. We shall seek to engage with key stakeholders such as Councils, Housing Executive and PSNI to encourage further adoption of the provisions in the Noise Act 1996 and to explore options to deal with this problem.

Dispersal/ Disorder Zones

We will screen these proposals and invite key stakeholders to engage with us through focus groups/ workshops in the autumn. On the basis of the information received during this process we shall give further consideration to developing options which would be most appropriate to our local needs.

<p>Q3. Are there other powers which would assist agencies to tackle environmental crime and anti - social behaviour more effectively & make neighbourhoods safer?</p>
--

Views expressed

Respondents indicated that, in addition to the proposals outlined in the strategy document, local authorities would welcome powers to tackle graffiti, litter, vandalism, abandoned vehicles, dog mess and fly-tipping. Respondents

also indicated that whilst new powers are welcome, it is equally important that they are effectively enforced.

There was agreement that the best way to tackle environmental crime and anti social behaviour was to identify, treat and resolve, the underlying reasons for this behaviour, rather than having to deal with the consequences of the behaviour. It was recognised resolution of this issue could only be achieved by a multi-agency approach which included government, statutory, voluntary and community groups in developing and delivering preventative and diversionary programmes. Respondents suggested true partnership and collective action would only be possible when the duty to co-operate was placed on a statutory basis.

NIO Response

We will screen proposals to introduce legislation, similar to those contained in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, to confer greater powers on local authorities and their employees to deal with issues such as graffiti, litter vandalism, abandoned vehicles, dog mess and fly-tipping.

We shall continue to consult with colleagues in the devolved administration to ascertain if the draft community planning legislation will contain measures to embed community safety in the activities of all responsible agencies. If provisions are not being included in this process we will consider options to take this forward.

Q4. How can we best tackle environmental crime such as graffiti, litter vandalism, abandoned vehicles, and fly-tipping and fly-posting?

See views and responses at question 3.

Q5. How can we improve the protection available to our emergency service workers?

Views expressed

Respondents generally agreed that the best method of providing protection to the emergency services was through preventative measures. Education, media campaigns and targeted initiatives were seen as the best solutions to

this problem. There was continued support for initiatives such as the Essential Services Group which delivers the key messages from the emergency services to schools to prevent attacks. Respondents also pointed out that people tended to focus on fire, police and ambulance services, but that it was important that other emergency workers such as Accident & Emergency staff were considered when initiatives are being developed.

NIO Response

We shall continue to provide support to the Essential Services Group and work in partnership to explore further options to protect our emergency services.

Q6. What else can we do to make town centres safer & more attractive at night?

Views expressed

Respondents agreed and supported proposals outlined in the consultation such as working with others to improve the night time economy, and Get Home Safe schemes. They also offered their support for the roll out of schemes such as the BAND (Bangor/Belfast Against Night-time Disorder) project, in which offenders are banned from all licensed premises in a town centre if they have committed an offence. Respondents also offered the following suggestions:

- safe zones projects and improved communications between door supervisors through the use of Radio Link;
- owners of licensed premises having to sign up to a code of conduct;
- limiting drinks promotions and access to cheap alcohol;
- developing transport strategies to ensure that people are not congregating on streets whilst trying to access transport to get them home; and
- increased use of community safety wardens.

NIO Response

We shall continue to work in partnership with colleagues in the statutory, community and voluntary sector to develop and evaluate the proposals outlined in the consultation document.

Q7. Current physical security measures - are these the right measures?

Views expressed

Respondents indicated that measures such as the Hate Incidents Practical Action (HIPA) scheme and RadioLink outlined in the document were appropriate. They also suggested further investment in CCTV and the reintroduction on a statutory basis of the lock out crime scheme with the criteria extended to include vulnerable individuals and households.

NIO Response

We shall continue in partnership with colleagues in the statutory, community and voluntary sector to develop and evaluate the proposals outlined in the consultation document. Whilst we have no plans to reintroduce the 'lock out crime' scheme we have funded a five year 'handy van' scheme in the Greater Belfast area. This scheme is managed by Help the Aged and Age Concern NI. The remit of the scheme is to install security measures to the homes of older people, free of charge, along with the fitting of a range of security and safety products. Evaluations of the scheme have been positive and Help the Aged and Age Concern NI have introduced this model in other areas of Northern Ireland. We plan to extend CCTV to other locations over the next two years.

Q8. How can we make our town centres safer & more attractive during the daytime?

Views expressed

Respondents welcomed initiatives that helped to create an attractive environment such as, the 'Ulster in Bloom' competition and pedestrian shopping zones. Some thought councils should adopt a 'zero tolerance' policy in relation to litter and dog fouling and would like to see higher visibility policing or greater use of community wardens.

NIO Response

As we have said in our response to Question 3, we will screen proposals to introduce legislation, similar to those contained in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, to confer greater powers on local authorities and their employees to deal with issues such as graffiti, litter, vandalism, abandoned vehicles, dog mess and fly-tipping.

Q9. Are there other measures we should be considering?

Views expressed

Respondents would like to see greater co-operation between the Department for Social Development, Roads Service, Planning Service, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and local councils in planning and adopting measures to improve local communities. They thought that all new capital investment projects should have to consider the practical design of communities and housing and adopt simple crime prevention principles in the design process to make sure people can enjoy a good quality of life, free from crime and fear of crime.

NIO Response

We are aware that colleagues in the devolved administration are taking forward draft community planning legislation which contains a

recommendation that 'the issue of co-terminosity is considered in relation to any new structural developments in public services in Northern Ireland to facilitate more effective community planning'. The introduction of this legislation and increased co-operation between all relevant organisations will make a significant contribution in addressing the views we received from respondents.

Focus on Families and Young People

The purpose of this theme is to reduce offending and re-offending, improve the lives of all citizens and promote social inclusion. Central to this is creating opportunities which offer people alternatives to becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour, and providing support to keep people out of the criminal justice system. Our proposals to achieve this include:

- Support orders - a civil order made to compel the individuals or their parents to accept tailored support to address the underlying causes of their anti-social behaviour in the interests of preventing reoccurrence of this behaviour;
- Mentoring;
- Support programmes for offenders; and
- Investing in diversionary activities for young people and encouraging parental responsibility

Q10. Proposed new powers - Would these powers be suitable for offering people a way out of offending?

Views expressed

A number of respondents declared their opposition to the introduction of the formal powers outlined in the consultation document. They voiced concerns in relation to a number of issues which are summarised below. In each instance concerns were expressed in regards to Human Rights legislation and equality legislation. A comment was also made regarding the timing for the introduction of the powers as it could coincide with the devolved administration's plans to develop a regional strategic approach to family and parenting support.

Individual Support Orders (ISOs)

There were concerns that ISOs could be disproportionately used against young people. Respondents pointed out that the consultation document had not provided any information on the penalty for non-compliance with ISOs, but

noted that in England and Wales a breach of an order was considered a criminal offence punishable by a fine of, up to, £1,000. Respondents were concerned that the orders had the potential to lead to widespread criminalisation of children and young people, even though the initial behaviour which led to an order being issued was not classified as criminal. Since imposition of an ISO could result in the recipient being criminally liable, provision should be made for a prospective recipient to be provided with legal advice and be represented by a solicitor.

Some respondents indicated there may be some merit in introducing these powers for individuals who were not prepared to engage with voluntary support services. They stressed that this would, however, have to be a 'last resort measure' after a process of incremental measures such as, diversionary programmes, anti-social behaviour warning letters and anti – social behaviour contracts had not succeeded.

Parenting Support Orders (PSOs)

Again concerns were expressed that Parenting Support Orders blurred the distinction between civil and criminal law. Parents whose children had been convicted of an offence or received an Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO) would be subject to a Court Order to improve their parenting skills. Concern was expressed that, if the Order was breached they would be criminalised, despite committing no original offence themselves, and fined up to £1,000. It was felt that many parents would be ill-equipped, or unable, to pay fines, particularly those parents living in areas of high socio-economic deprivation and poverty. Where parents were living apart the information provided did not make clear which parent would be subject to an order. Imposition of PSOs could result in the recipients being criminally liable, therefore provision should be made for a prospective recipient to be provided with legal advice and also be represented by a solicitor.

Piloting Parental Compensation Orders

Given that the age of criminal responsibility is currently 10 years old some respondents were concerned at the proposal to target parental compensation at parents of children under 10. This proposal was seen by a number of respondents as effectively lowering the criminal age of responsibility 'by the back door', rather than raising it as recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Respondents also highlighted that rates of crime and anti-social behaviour were higher in areas of social and economic disadvantage in Northern Ireland, and therefore Compensation Orders would be more likely to have a disproportionate impact on families who are living in poverty.

NIO Response

We will equality screen the proposals and invite key stakeholders to engage with us through focus groups/ workshops in the autumn. On the basis of the information received during this process we shall give further consideration to what would be most appropriate to our local needs.

Q11. Are there advantages to bringing in legislation to introduce parenting support orders to Northern Ireland?

Views expressed

Respondents did not specify advantages to introducing parenting support orders to Northern Ireland.

Q12. How can we best divert young people from becoming involved in crime & anti - social behaviour?

Views expressed

Respondents gave a collective view that investment in early-intervention programmes to prevent young people becoming involved in offending or anti-social behaviour and diversionary activities were the best methods for addressing this issue. Respondents suggested there should be continued

investment and development of mentoring schemes, active citizenship initiatives and intergenerational projects with organisations who had demonstrated an ability to deliver successful results.

NIO Response

We will continue to support and develop in partnership with key stakeholders diversionary schemes such as Summer Splash and Halloween Splash. We will also continue to provide funding for voluntary organisations such as Northern Ireland Association Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) and Extern who provide programmes aimed at reducing crime and its impact on people and communities through preventative, diversion and community based high support programmes.

Q13. How do we best make support available to parents?

Views expressed

It was suggested by some that enforcement is not the answer but, rather offering and encouraging voluntary commitment. Family support should include programmes which provide opportunities to learn about the parental role, obligations regarding child development, child care, promoting positive parent – child relationships and encouraging involvement in family and community based activities. Respondents also made favourable comments on support programmes such as, the Child and Parent Support (Caps) which provides intensive support services to families with children aged 8 to 13 who are at risk of offending, which is delivered by NIACRO.

NIO Response

As noted in our response to question 10 we will equality screen proposals for support orders and invite key stakeholders to engage with us through focus groups/ workshops before giving further consideration to what measures would be most appropriate to our local needs. We will also continue to consider diversionary and support programmes.

Q14. Are these proposals likely to assist in reducing offending and/ or reoffending?

Views expressed

Respondents were generally supportive of the measures outlined in the consultation document to support the rehabilitation of offenders.

NIO Response

We note this positive response.

Q15. Are there other ways to support, and provide services to, those involved in crime & anti - social behaviour to tackle the causes of crime & prevent them re-offending?

Respondents' views to this question are already reflected in views outlined in questions 12, 13 and 14.

Building Strong, Confident Communities

The purpose of this theme is to increase confidence in the criminal justice system and provide public reassurance, particularly amongst more vulnerable individuals and communities. Its purpose is also to increase confidence in the individual agencies responsible for community safety, encourage reporting of incidents and ensure that effective action is taken. Our proposals to achieve this include:

- increasing the support available for victims and witnesses;
- raising the profile of community safety at NI and local level;
- increasing the availability of training for practitioners;
- improving agencies' accountability to communities; and
- supporting the particularly vulnerable such as older persons, minority groups and victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Q16. Are the proposals the correct way forward?

Views expressed

Respondents were supportive of the proposals outlined in the consultation document. They welcomed initiatives which have been developed to tackle domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

NIO Response

We shall continue, in partnership with colleagues in the statutory, community and voluntary sector, to develop and evaluate the proposals outlined in the consultation document.

Q17. Do court processes for victims of anti-social behaviour & crime need improvement, and if so, how?

Views expressed

Some respondents expressed concerns that offenders appeared to be given greater precedence in the Criminal Justice system than victims and witnesses. They felt that the court processes often gave victims little

satisfaction as they had limited opportunity to voice their concerns, or to express how crime impacted on them. Some respondents welcomed plans to roll out the witness support service into all courts. They also asked for additional considerations and support interventions to be made available for victims such as, easy access to interpreting services for victims from ethnic communities.

NIO Response

NIO, in conjunction with colleagues within the criminal justice system and voluntary agencies, have developed a five year strategy for victims and witnesses called 'Bridging the Gap'. The Victims and Witness Task Force Group is working on delivery of various strands of the strategy including:

- the development of localised directories of services to ensure consistency of onward referral to further support services;
- a code of practice of standards for all criminal justice agencies to use when interacting with victims and witnesses of crime; and
- training in the use of special measures for interviewing and supporting victims and witnesses of crime pre-trial.

The NIO, NI Court Service and the Public Prosecution Service have also provided additional funding for interpreters. Delivery of these measures should go some way to improving court processes for victims.

Q18. How can we improve the support available to victims of crime and anti-social behaviour?

Views expressed

Some respondents suggested that there was a need to ensure greater access to support services for victims. Support for victims should come from a range of service providers who have the skills required to deal with specific incidents and victims should be referred to specialist providers such as, Victim Support, the Rainbow Project and Women's Aid. Reporting mechanisms for victims and witnesses could, it was suggested, be enhanced by the development of partnerships and protocols between voluntary and statutory organisations.

NIO Response

We will continue our support for organisations such as, Victim Support Northern Ireland (VSNi) whose staff and volunteers offer emotional support, information and practical help and a referral service for people who have been the victims or witnesses of a crime. We will also work in co-operation with key stake holders to explore opportunities to develop partnership working and further enhance support services.

Q19. How can we better empower communities to engage in community safety initiatives?
--

Views expressed

Initiatives like Policing and Communities Together (PACT) and neighbourhood and consultative forums were considered to play an important role, but some respondents commented that there needs to be greater clarity about links between the agencies dealing with community safety. Respondents also indicated they would like to see more opportunities for people to contribute to the decision making process. Holding localised, community focussed events to encourage participation, building on existing skills and further development of Community Safety Forums, based, for example, on the West Belfast model were suggested as possible ways to do this.

NIO Response

We are aware that there are a number of projects which have been designed on a partnership basis to encourage communities to become involved in community safety initiatives. We shall continue to liaise with key stakeholders to build on evaluations of these projects to identify future development needs. This work will include an evaluation of the West Belfast Community Safety Forum project.

Q20. Should we introduce a community payback?

Many respondents were in favour of some form of community payback, as long as measures were in place to make sure participants were not victimised within their local communities. Respondents commented that there were schemes in place which were successfully delivering on the idea of restorative justice such as, the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) conferencing service and Community Based Restorative Justice Schemes (CBRJ).

NIO Response

We agree with the respondents' view that YJA conferencing service and CBRJ schemes are providing a restorative justice service and they, along with community service orders, are providing a community payback which suits local needs. It would appear the only element of payback which is not operating locally is the opportunity for members of the public to have a say on what work is carried out in community service. Probation Board Northern Ireland (PBNI) will be launching a strategy to involve local communities in determining work opportunities. It would appear that as adequate provision in relation to community payback currently exists there is no need to develop this proposal further.

Q21. How can we facilitate communities inputting to this process?

Views expressed

Some respondents commented that we can do this by creating opportunities for people to contribute to the decision making process.

NIO Response

As noted in our response to question 20, the PBNI are currently developing a strategy to encourage local communities to become involved in inputting to a 'community payback' process.

Q22. What are the best ways of raising the profile of community safety so that people feel safer?

Views expressed

It was argued that the perception of crime is strongly influenced by what is reported in the media and this can lead to a heightened fear of crime, particularly amongst older people. It was suggested that better communication of community safety issues was needed to ensure the general public is aware of all measures which have been put in place to promote community safety and reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour. It was further suggested that those organisations involved in community safety work should also report on their performance against targets so that the public could see real evidence of a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour.

NIO Response

The Community Safety Unit has already identified communication as an area of concern. It is taking steps to maximise communication with the public as evidenced by the recent distribution, to all homes, of the 'Safety Matters' Newsletter.

Q23. How can we encourage more people to report crime & anti social behaviour?

Views expressed

Respondents expressed a view that crime was often under reported due to a perception that ineffective action will be taken. It was suggested that appropriate agencies should take steps to encourage the reporting of crime and counter the perception of ineffective action.

NIO Response

We are aware that steps have been taken to build public confidence and encourage the reporting of crime through the use of initiatives such as, 'Crime Stoppers' and 'Community Based Restorative Justice Schemes'. The Northern Ireland Office continues this work through targets set within the

Public Service Agreement (PSA) “Make Communities Safer” to increase confidence in the criminal justice system and policing by 2011. Full details of delivery targets and PSAs are available on the NIO website www.nio.gov.uk. Collectively these steps aim to address the issue of public confidence and encourage the reporting of crime.

Q24. Supporting the vulnerable - Are the proposals the correct way forward?

Views expressed

Respondents generally welcomed the proposals outlined in the strategy document but some expressed their disappointment and frustration at the lack of a dedicated strategy for older people and the lack of provision for older people in the revised Community Safety Strategy. There was also concern that the strategy did not address the issue of suicide.

NIO Response

Older people play a key role in our communities and as such are included within the broad scope of the revised community safety strategy. Many issues which affect older people, for example, anti-social behaviour and domestic burglary, are specifically addressed in the strategy and the measures proposed will directly and indirectly benefit older people as well as other age groups.

Additionally we are developing a Strategy for Ensuring the Safety of Older People based on the responses to the 2007 CSU consultation on ‘Proposals for the Safety of Older People’. It will set out how we intend to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour experienced by older people and provide reassurance to older people to help reduce the fear of crime. We have established a Reference Group to take this work forward and will publish the outcomes of this work at the end of September 2009.

We are aware that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety NI are taking forward measures to address mental health issues. This includes the public information campaign ‘Minding your head’ to increase

awareness of mental health issues and provide information on organisations that can offer support.

Q25. What would help to improve the court experience for victims of domestic violence & sexual crime?

See views and responses at questions 17.

Q26. What other actions can we take to help particularly vulnerable members of our community feel safer?

Views expressed

Whilst respondents welcomed the provision of practical assistance through the Hate Incidents Practical Action (HIPA) scheme they thought more action was required to prosecute offenders and develop educational programmes to reduce this type of crime.

NIO Response

We are working with partners to progress the action plan arising from the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) inspection into hate crime: 'Hate Crime in Northern Ireland', January 2007, a full copy of the report is available on www.cjini.org. Recently we part funded research into hate crime against people with disabilities and will take forward any recommendations arising from that.

Delivery

Q27. Are there other ways in which we can encourage organisations to work together more effectively on crime & anti-social behaviour issues?

Views expressed

As stated in early sections of this document some respondents thought the best way to encourage organisations was through the development of a joined-up community safety strategy which reinforced the importance of a multi agency approach to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. All relevant organisations should have a statutory obligation to work together and this would have to be demonstrated in their business planning processes. They should regularly review programmes and initiatives to identify best practice.

NIO Response

As stated in our response to question 3, we shall continue to consult with colleagues in the devolved administration to ascertain if the draft community planning legislation will contain measures to embed community safety in the activities of all responsible agencies. If provisions are not being taken in this process we will consider our options to take this forward.

Q28. How can we best inform the public about performance?

Views expressed

As recorded in question 22, respondents considered improved communication of community safety matters was essential to make sure the public were aware of measures which had been put in place to promote community safety and reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour. Organisations involved in community safety work should report on their performance against targets so that the public can see real evidence of a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour. We were also asked to consider the various communication methods which could be utilised to help deliver this message.

NIO Response

As recorded in question 22, we agree it is essential to promote community safety and the positive outcomes of initiatives. The Community Safety Unit is taking steps to maximise communications as evidenced by the recent distribution, to all homes, of the 'Safety Matters' Newsletter.

Equality Implications

Q29. Do you consider that any of the proposals in this document will have a positive equality impact on groups within any of these nine categories? If so, what is it?

Views expressed

No specific responses were received to this question.

Q30. Do you consider that any of the proposals in this document will have an adverse equality impact on groups within any of these nine categories? If so, what is it & how might we mitigate against this adverse impact?

Views expressed

Respondents thought there could be negative impacts on a number of groups within the nine categories. They questioned whether the proposals outlined in the strategy had been subjected to Equality Screening or considered against Human rights legislation. They wanted to know if a separate screening process would be carried out.

NIO Response

The consultation document contained a wide range of proposals upon which we wished to seek public views. Each proposal will be subject to screening to ensure that it meets our obligations under Human Rights and equality legislation. We will also actively engage with those groups affected by, or impacted by, a particular policy strand.

Q31. Will any of the proposals potentially affect the promotion of good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Views expressed

No specific responses were received to this question.

Q32. Do you have any other comments on the equality impact of these proposals?

Please see views and response at question 30.

Annex A

List of Respondents

Action for Children Northern Ireland
Age Concern
Age Sector Platform
Antrim Borough Community Safety Partnership
Antrim Borough Council
Ards Borough Council
Ards Community Safety Partnership
Armagh Community Safety Partnership
Armagh City and District Council
Armagh District Policing Partnership
Armagh Senior Citizens Forum
Ballymena Borough Council
Ballymena Community Safety Partnership
Ballymoney Borough Council
Banbridge Community Safety Partnership
Banbridge District Policing Partnership
Barnardo's Northern Ireland
Belfast Community Safety Partnership
Belfast City Council
Belfast Holylands Regeneration Association
Belfast South Community Resources
Big Lottery Fund
British Psychology Society
Committee on the Administration of Justice
Carrickfergus Community Safety Partnership
Causeway Women's Aid
Children in Northern Ireland
Children's Law Centre
Coleraine District Policing Partnership

Community Relations Council
Cookstown Community Safety Partnership
Corpus Christi Youth Centre
Craigavon Community Safety Partnership
Community Restorative Justice Ireland
Derry City Council
Disability Action
Down District Policing Partnership
Dungannon & South Tyrone Community Safety Partnership
Dungannon Senior Citizens Forum
Early Years
Equality Commission
Fermanagh Community Safety Partnership
Forthspring Inter Community Group Youth Programme
Greater Shankill Community Safety Network
Help the Aged
Include Youth
Law Society of Northern Ireland
Limavady Community Safety Partnership
Magherafelt Community Safety Partnership
Moyle Community Safety Partnership
Newry & Mourne Community Safety Partnership
Newtownabbey Borough Council
Newtownabbey Community Safety Partnership
North Down Borough Council
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Northern Ireland Policing Board
Northern Trust Domestic Violence Partnership
Parents Advice Centre

Playboard
Police Service of Northern Ireland
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Quaker Service
Rainbow Project
Robert Torrens
Sandy Row Community Forum
Save the Children
School of Law, Queen's University Belfast
Social Democratic and Labour Party
Shelter Northern Ireland
Sinn Fein
South Tyrone Empowerment Programme
Strabane Community Safety Partnership
Supporting Communities Northern Ireland
The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
Unison Northern Ireland
Victim Support Northern Ireland
Volunteer Development Agency
Voice Of Young People In Care
Western Health and Social Services Board
Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland
Youthnet