

Section 75 and Schedule 9 The Northern Ireland Act 1998

PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



Community Development Funding

Strategy and Policy

Executive Summary

**Equality Impact Assessment
June 2005**

**The Community Development Strategy and Policy
for
the Probation Board for Northern Ireland**

An Equality Impact Assessment

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires each public authority, when carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons, namely

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

Without prejudice to its obligations above, the public authority must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

PBNI produced its Equality Scheme in keeping with its statutory duty and also identified a number of policies that it believed required further assessment as they had the potential for differential impact. The Community Development Funding Strategy and supporting documentation is one such policy.

The Strategy and Policy

PBNI has been allocating funding to groups for a number of years. This funding had been allocated through an internal process that needed to be modernised to enhance transparency and accountability.

PBNI has now drafted a strategy, policy and supporting documentation and is undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment on these documents to identify

ways to eliminate the potential for differential impact and to help promote equality and good relations.

It is proposed to advertise the policy widely stating the priorities for funding each financial year. Groups could then complete and submit an application form stating their proposals. A panel made up of representatives from PBNI will consider the proposals, determine whether they meet PBNI criteria and take decisions on grant allocation. Unsuccessful applicants will also be advised about the reasons for refusal of their application.

Funding allocations will be made in three categories:-

1. Services for adjudicated offenders
2. Services for preventative and diversionary work
3. Emergency services.

Aim of the Strategy

The aim of the Community Development Funding Strategy is to establish an equitable and transparent community development funding strategy in support of the organisational legislative requirement. The strategy has various supporting papers to facilitate its implementation namely:-

- Community Development Funding Policy
- Community Development Funding Strategy Structures and Systems

Aim of the Policy

Around 20% of PBNI's budget will be utilised for Community Development.

Analysis of data

Quantitative and qualitative information was collected by PBNI, although the quantitative information was limited as the process operates in a qualitative environment.

From the information analysed there would appear to be a positive impact on young (age 25 and under) males, as both groups benefit more from the funding than the other s75 groups.

There is limited uptake from the groups representing sexual orientation and racial group and marital status, while some funding allocation was provided for women's groups, dependants and disability groups. Groups who promote political beliefs or religious activities are ineligible for the funding. However, funding is allocated for communities who have a single religious identity or for those who provide cross-community work.

Assessment of impacts

PBNI believes that the distribution of funding for activities which impact more on young males can be justified as the policy is directed towards addressing offending and re-offending behaviour through direct work or through diversionary activities. Given the large proportion of people within the criminal justice system who are young males, PBNI believes that the current impact of the policy is justifiable.

Mitigating actions

In revising its policy PBNI believes that by advertising widely it will attract a greater and more diverse applicant pool that could enhance the types of groups who receive future funding. This will enable PBNI to help promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

PBNI also believes that the policy can be changed to take account of some consultees' views (expressed at pre-consultation) and that those changes can also help to address equality and good relations. The proposed changes are summarised at Annex A to the EQIA.

Consultation

PBNI would be pleased to receive views on all the equality aspects of this policy. In particular we have highlighted a number of areas throughout the document and incorporated a number of questions into an accompanying

questionnaire. The information provided on these areas will help PBNI to consider further the potential impacts on areas where we have limited information.

The questionnaire can be obtained from our website or consultees can request a full copy of the EQIA and accompanying questionnaire.

PBNI will be happy to meet with any consultee who wishes to provide feedback on the Community Development Funding documentation and the EQIA.

PBNI will also be happy to take e-mail responses with or without the questionnaire provided.

Consultation closes on the 9 September 2005.

Responses should be sent to:

**The Consultation Co-Ordinator
The Compliance Unit
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
80/90 North Street
Belfast
BT1 1LD**

Tel: 02890 262400

Minicom: 02890 262490

Fax: 02890 262470

E-mail: info@pbni.org.uk

Decisions

Following consultation a document will be drafted for the Board stating consultees' views and identifying proposed changes. Once the Board consider this document and take decisions about the Community

Development Funding Strategy and documentation, the Board's decisions and outcome of the consultation will be summarised for consultees and made available by 30 November 2005.

Monitoring

Following the introduction of this policy, PBNI will put in place a monitoring and review system to consider impacts of the policy after 12 months of implementation. The information will be considered as part of the strategy and policy review process.