



PROBATION BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING GOOD RELATIONS

Document Version Control Sheet

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1. Introduction

Section 75 (2)(b) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory obligation on organisations listed under the act to give regard to “promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group”.

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland in its equality scheme sets out how it would fulfill its statutory obligation in this regard and how it would promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

The promotion of good relations is a complex area and requires an understanding of the part sectarianism and racism play in dividing Northern Ireland’s society. It also requires that we see beyond this division towards a society that makes the most of difference and appreciates diversity with all its challenges. Good relations practice has to engage people in seeing the “other” as a potential gift not a danger. It has to challenge sectarianism and racism, it needs to promote equality, develop respect for diversity and raise awareness of the interdependence of the people and institutions within Northern Ireland. There can be no ambivalence towards intolerance when building good relations

2. The Probation Board for Northern Ireland and Good Relations

The potential of devolution and new political structures, along with important legislation around equality and good relations have created new opportunities for public services to model a vision that mobilizes the diverse experiences and interests of staff in pursuit of a more plural society. In an age where organisational cultures are often highly technical and administratively dominated, PBNI wants to maintain a wider vision of people and society being able to learn, grow and change.

Over the years of community conflict, PBNI has been located on various interfaces and visibly maintained delicate, principled and open lines to all in the midst of extreme violence. That some offenders will have been responsible for sectarian or racist actions, places a responsibility on the organisation to ensure that good relations is an integral part of service delivery.

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland with its concern for wellbeing reflected in its organisational aim, its statement of ethics and its clear values already promotes relationships where people are acknowledged and have their place. This is the essence of our value base. The nature of the organisation therefore enables it to adopt a commitment approach to promoting good relations rather than a legal compliance base to dealing with inequality, good relations and human rights. A commitment that starts internally with the recognition that the quality of internal relationships between staff are essential building blocks to the delivery of an effective public service.

3. Good Relations Vision for PBNI

In working towards a Shared Future for NI, the Board aim to create an atmosphere of trust within PBNI and with those with whom we come in contact, where people feel comfortable with their individuality, are not adversely treated because of their religious belief, political opinion or race, and have the strength to challenge narrow attitudes that perpetuate segregation and fear. PBNI aim to achieve this vision through the successful implementation of its Good Relations action plan.

4. Commitment

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland will fulfill its statutory obligations and in particular will promote:

1. Equality of opportunity
2. Good relations
3. A reflective and diverse workforce
4. Tolerance, understanding and justice

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland demonstrates its commitment by public statements contained in the Corporate and Business Plans, leadership at Corporate and Senior Management level and devolving responsibility throughout the organisation by encouraging each team and business unit to set objectives in support of promoting equality and good relations.

5. Principles

In delivering good relations we will:

Be impartial and fair with each other and with those to whom we provide services.

Help create a safe environment for people to work in and for service users.

Challenge narrow attitudes in an appropriate manner.

Respect the backgrounds and cultures of others.

Listen, understand and act appropriately to peoples concerns or stories and ensure that the correct help is provided.

Learn from others' experiences.

Support other colleagues and those with whom we come in contact in an open and tolerant environment.

Accept that we might not always share the same views as others but we are comfortable with that acceptance.

Help to build trust and to promote better social and cultural understanding within and outside the organisation.

Ensure that aggravating factors are identified in Pre-sentence reports.

Integrate the principles of a Shared Future into the culture of PBNI (as set out in 1.4 of the Shared Future Policy – replicated at Appendix 2 of this Strategy).

6. Current Position

Since 2002 the Probation Board for Northern Ireland has worked with the Future Ways programme, a University of Ulster based organisation, whose research programme on community relations identified three interlinked public policy parameters: equity, diversity and interdependence. In moving good relations forward an internal audit was conducted by Future Ways to identify the different perspectives which existed within the organisation. This involved a series of conversations with randomly selected staff from different grades, locations, backgrounds, genders and religious belief. The outcome of this audit enabled the Probation Board to develop a series of actions to take forward good relations work in the workplace. A good relations development group was established which helped take forward this work.

The achievements to date are set out at paragraph 7 below.

7. Achievements to March 2006

- 7.1 The working partnership with the Future Ways programme to promote good relations in the workplace and in service delivery has continued.
- 7.2 A group of staff continue to meet – the development group – to work on building good relations in PBNI.
- 7.3 This development group have worked with the Board, Senior Management Team and some operational units to develop awareness.
- 7.4 The development group have used the annual staff days to promote good relations in the workplace.
- 7.5 Promoting good relations figures prominently in the PBNI Corporate and Business Plans.
- 7.6 Promoting good relations is a key theme in the induction programme for all new staff joining the service.
- 7.7 PBNI is feeding its experience of promoting good relations into the wider criminal justice system through membership of sub-groups of the Criminal Justice Board and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland/Northern Ireland Prison Service Resettlement Strategy.
- 7.8 Evidence of a commitment to develop an equal opportunities and harassment policy and to clearly demonstrate a commitment to anti-racism and anti-discrimination practices is now part of the criteria for eligibility to secure PBNI community development funding.
- 7.9 2005 Staff Survey showed 59% of staff felt that PBNI respected individual differences and 62% felt that PBNI put equal opportunity policy into practice. 45% of staff agreed that PBNI valued diversity.
- 7.10 The development group has drawn up a list of interpretation services and updates this as and when required.

- 7.11 PBNI are producing a number of information leaflets in various languages.
- 7.12 The five-day training course 'Growing a Learning Society' by the Future Ways Programme, University of Ulster is part of the annual training calendar.

8. Drivers

- 8.1 A Shared Future. Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland, March 2005.
- 8.2 Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2005-2010.
- 8.3 Strength Through Diversity. A Diversity Strategy for the Criminal Justice System Northern Ireland.
- 8.4 The Hate Crime legislation. If hate is an aggravating factor in an offence then the Probation Board has to ensure that in its assessments, report writing and supervision, that these aggravating factors are addressed.
- 8.5 Effectiveness Review of PBNI Equality Scheme.
- 8.6 Our Statement of Ethics underpins all we do.
- 8.7 The 2005 Staff Survey reflected a positive perception on how the Probation Board respected individual difference and put Equal Opportunity policy into practice. As an employer, the Probation Board wishes to improve this level of satisfaction.
- 8.8 The need to develop and sustain a diverse and reflective work force.
- 8.9 To ensure that policy development at the Criminal Justice Board level takes account of the importance of building good relations.

9. Impact on Good Relations

This strategy has been developed to make visible and reinforce PBNI's commitment to good relations. It also seeks to put in place actions to improve good relations in the organization and for those who come in contact with the organization.

10. Future Actions

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland intends to continue the work already commenced within the organisation and where possible will work with others in the criminal justice system, and representative of community bodies to help move good relations forward within and outside the organisation.

PBNI has committed itself to achieving a series of actions which are set out in Appendix 1.

11. Review

This Strategy will be reviewed three years following Board approval.

GOOD RELATIONS ACTION PLAN FOR STRATEGY 2006/2007

	Action	Timescale	Lead Responsibility	Completed
10.1	Develop a training plan identifying the training needs of staff in PBNI to deal with racism, sectarianism and hate crime.	Spring 2007	L&D Senior Manager	
10.2	Maintain representation on Good Relations Development Group to ensure full representation across PBNI.	Ongoing	Head of Policy, Planning and Business	
10.3	Ensure each Business Unit and team have an objective and performance measures in place to promote equal opportunities and good relations and that progress against objective is monitored and reported on at the end of each financial year.	June 2006 and Annually	Head of Policy Planning and Business Development	
10.4	Work with other Criminal Justice partners on the recording of hate crime in NI and develop further actions.	Commenced Autumn 2006	Head of Policy, Planning and Business	
10.5	Produce an information leaflet and business case for promoting good relations	Spring 2007	Good Relations Development Group	
10.6	Develop accredited learning routes in building good relations. Liaise with Skills for Justice Group and develop joined up approach to delivery of good relations training across criminal justice system	Commenced Summer 2006 – work ongoing	L&D Senior Manager	
10.7	Commence the development of a good relations programme for offenders and pilot in PBNI. Work with NIPS to develop Good Relations Programme for Prisons.	Commence work Autumn 2006 with programme delivery commencing Autumn 2007	ACO Interventions	
10.8	Consultation on Good Relations Strategy using different methods to reach a wide variety of groups.	Spring/Summer 2006	Head of Policy, Planning and Business; Compliance Manager; Good Relations Development Group	Completed October 2006
10.9	Develop a plan for office visits throughout PBNI to discuss Good Relations within the organisation	Commenced Summer 2006 - Ongoing	Good Relations Development Group	

	Action	Timescale	Lead Responsibility	Completed
10.10	Exit interviews in PBNI to include a good relations component	Autumn 2006	HR Manager	
10.11	Develop induction training on Good Relations into a further 2-day programme and incorporate elements from Future Ways 'Growing a Learning Society'.	Commenced Summer 2006 – work ongoing	L&D Senior Manager Good Relations Development Group	
10.12	Continue to ensure Good Relations features in PBNI Corporate and Business Plans	Ongoing Annually	Head of Policy, Planning and Business	
10.13	Review the current provision for interpretation and translation services in PBNI, identify issues and make recommendations for change to the Policy and Practice Committee	Commence Autumn 2006	Good Relations Development Group	
10.14	Consider the participation of migrant worker communities as part of the review of Community Service Orders and the promotion of good relations.	Commenced Autumn 2006		
10.15	The Good Relations Development Group will review practices developed to improve service delivery and good relations to people from different racial groups in other jurisdictions ie; England and Wales; Republic of Ireland and Scotland.	Commence Summer 2007	Good Relations Development Group	

A Shared Future – March 2005

Policy and strategic framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland

(Extract)

Fundamental Principles

1.4.1 The policy aim and strategic framework will be underpinned by a number of fundamental principles.

Political, civic and community leadership

While Government will lead and co-ordinate a new policy on good relations, it is incumbent upon every individual and organisation in Northern Ireland to play their part to promote a shared Northern Ireland. Real change will require leadership, vision, institutional commitment and long-term policies to promote and sustain change.

The North/South and East/West perspectives

Improving relationships within Northern Ireland has to be viewed in the wider context of developing strong relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, and between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Progress towards a shared society must be built upon the significant progress that has been achieved in promoting equality of opportunity and human rights.

A shared future is important to everyone in Northern Ireland

Improved community relations should benefit everyone and threaten no one. Building trust involves everyone, including political and civic leadership and institutions of government. It should not be expected to emanate from violent interfaces alone. Conflict at interface areas is the tragic symptom of a systemic lack of trust rather than the sole cause or evidence of it.

Separate but equal is not an option. Parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable both morally and economically Good relations must build on the significant progress that has been made on the equality agenda. No one is arguing for an artificially homogeneous Northern Ireland and no one will be asked to suppress or give up their chosen identity. However, the costs of a divided society - whilst recognising, of course, the very real fears of people around safety and security considerations - are abundantly clear: segregated housing and education, security costs, less than efficient public service provision, and deep-rooted intolerance that has too often been used to justify violent sectarianism and racism. Policy that simply adapts to, but does not alter these challenges, results in inefficient resource allocations. These are not sustainable in the medium to long-term.

Improving relations is an issue that affects all public services

Equality of opportunity and the promotion of good relations are central to delivering good-quality public services and a better quality of life for everyone. The good relations duty under S75 (2) will shape the public service response.

The legacy of conflict and violence must be dealt with

Conflict and violence between and within communities have left a profound legacy. This legacy is visible in terms of deaths, injuries and bereavements - civilian and security forces; in terms of those who have served time in prison as a result of being directly involved in the conflict; in terms of how lives, identities, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours have been shaped. All of these have crafted and continue to shape people's life chances.

Relationships matter and are central

Moving from relationships based on mistrust and defence to relationships rooted in mutual recognition and trust is the essence of reconciliation. Where relationships have been shaped by threat and fear over a long period, we must make changes through policy and law to address that threat and fear. The absence of trust will set back both economic and social development as firms look for more stable environments and we fail to realise the talents of our diverse community.

Northern Ireland is no longer a bipolar society – it is enriched because it is becoming more culturally diverse

As our society becomes more peaceful and prosperous – and as our demand for skilled labour exceeds what can be supplied locally – we are seeing greater ethnic diversity than ever before. There are substantial economic and social benefits to be derived from this increased diversity. Our businesses and public services have the workers that they need and our communities, and in particular our children, are broadening their knowledge and experience of new cultures. However, a small minority in Northern Ireland society has subjected new migrant workers, students and others from racial minority backgrounds to racially motivated intimidation and violence. We must combat racism and sectarianism or any other extremism and proactively encourage understanding and tolerance.