



Northern  
Ireland  
Office



TOGETHER. STRONGER. SAFER.

Community safety in Northern Ireland :  
A consultation paper

October 2008

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## **Foreword**

Since 2003, the Community Safety Unit in the NIO has been working to bring about a more co-ordinated approach to tackling community safety issues across Northern Ireland. New structures were established to deliver community safety including frontline Community Safety Managers and the creation in every council area of a Community Safety Partnership (CSP) with a dedicated action plan to tackle local priorities.

At a regional level, the Unit has also worked closely with the various justice agencies, other government departments and the community and voluntary sector to tackle the broad range of issues related to crime and fear of crime.

We know this partnership approach is making a real impact, with a 15 per cent reduction in recorded crime in the last 5 years – this translates to 21,352 fewer criminal acts perpetrated against the people of Northern Ireland (that's an average of 82 less offences every week for the last 5 years).

Public confidence in the criminal justice system has also shown an encouraging increase. Recently published findings from the 2006/07 Northern Ireland Crime Survey show that public confidence in the criminal justice system has increased from 39% in 2003/04 to 44% in 2007. This was two percentage points ahead of the target to be achieved by 2007/08 (42%). Again, this real and significant improvement has been the result of partnership working at many levels between statutory and non statutory bodies and communities. I commend the many agencies across Northern Ireland who have come together to work in partnership for the good of the communities they serve.

But we cannot afford to be complacent. Crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour can have a devastating effect on peoples' lives and we must continue to tackle these issues at all levels. Tackling the day to day community safety issues, which may seem minor if considered in isolation, can make a real difference to quality of life and perceptions, or fear, of crime. We must also deal with the underlying causes of these problems to prevent them spiralling out of control. Only with a multi-track approach including diversion, support, environmental improvements and enforcement action can we create a Northern Ireland where all citizens have positive opportunities, are safe and feel safe.

Northern Ireland has changed in many ways since the launch of the first Community Safety Strategy and that change continues. I am conscious that further change is likely which will bring additional challenges such as a strategy for reducing offending. The Review of Public Administration will also have an impact on community safety structures. And of course the completion of devolution, with the handing over of criminal justice and policing to locally elected politicians, will allow the devolved administration to identify and agree their own community safety priorities.

Nevertheless I think it is timely to begin the process of revisiting the area of community safety to identify priorities for the next 5 years and to review and build upon past successes. This document is an opportunity to comment on the Government's proposals to further develop community safety over the next five years and I would encourage everyone to contribute.



**Paul Goggins**  
**Minister of State for Northern Ireland**

October 2008

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall aim for the community safety strategy is:

***To make Northern Ireland a safer place to live, work and socialise.***

This aim is underpinned by targets in the new *Make Communities Safer* and *Justice for All* Public Service Agreements for 2008 – 11 to reduce anti-social behaviour; to reduce violent crimes, including hate crime, knife crime, alcohol-related violence and domestic violence; to reduce re-offending; and to increase confidence in the police and the criminal justice system.

This consultation document builds on the work of the first community safety strategy, *Creating a safer Northern Ireland through partnership*, which identified 9 key issues to be tackled:

- Car Crime
- Domestic Burglary
- Business and Retail Crime
- Offences against individuals, particularly Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- Youth Offending and Criminality
- Offences Motivated by Prejudice and Hatred
- Drug, Substance and Alcohol Abuse
- Anti-social Behaviour and Low Level Neighbourhood Disorder
- Fear of Crime amongst Older People, Vulnerable Adults, Victims and Children

Partnerships were created to take forward actions set out in the Strategy and many positive achievements resulted. Building upon that success this new strategy will use existing structures to continue to work to make Northern Ireland a safer place to live, work and socialise. We also want to ensure that those who wish to visit our towns and cities can do so safely and without fear of crime.

We have identified 3 cross-cutting key themes which cover all aspects of community safety:

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

Underpinning each strand is the resolve to tackle the underlying causes and the effects of crime and anti-social behaviour in order to prevent their occurrence or reoccurrence. Reducing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour will, by definition, make communities safer and more sustainable.

This strategy will work towards a Northern Ireland in which crime and anti-social behaviour have declined and there is less fear of crime, enabling people to feel safer in their homes, neighbourhoods and town centres.

We are keen to encourage the public to take a much greater personal involvement in making their communities safer and to work in partnership with all key stakeholders.

Where necessary in this paper we highlight where we consider that additional legislation would assist practitioners, but we are conscious that the completion of devolution will determine how such powers are progressed – either through the local Assembly or through Westminster. The introduction of additional legislation in isolation will not of course solve the issues. Legislative provision therefore provides only one of the many opportunities to make our communities safer.

In developing this Strategy we will seek to maintain a balance between the rights of victims, witnesses, offenders and law-abiding communities.

#### 1. Creating safer neighbourhoods

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. We support the introduction of measures to complement policing delivery such as community safety or neighbourhood wardens.

Our proposals to achieve this include:

- Building on the success of existing measures such as Lock Out Crime and Operation Clean Up, by 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
- Building on the success of programmes such as the Inclusive Model of Partnership Against Car Theft (IMPACT) to tackle specific crimes in specific communities

## 2. 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, challenging unacceptable behaviour and providing support to keep people out of the criminal justice system.

We will work to reduce the number of people, particularly young people, offending and becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour or at risk of becoming involved in these. We will also work to reduce re-offending.

Our proposals to achieve this include:

- Mentoring

- Support programmes for offenders
- Investing in diversionary activities for young people
- Encouraging parental responsibility

### 3. 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.

We will work to reduce the perception of crime and develop communities that are self-confident and confident in the local agencies that serve them.

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
- Supporting the particularly vulnerable such as older persons, minority groups and victims of domestic and sexual violence

### Conclusion

This document details the achievements to date in community safety in Northern Ireland and outlines proposals for building on them to further improve community safety in Northern Ireland over the next 5 years.

Partnership will continue to be the key to delivering the aims of the new strategy. This will include a co-ordinated approach across government and the commitment of all government agencies and departments to deliver on relevant aspects of the strategy.

The Government is keen to obtain your views. Details of how to respond to this consultation document are at Annex C.

## Chapter 1: Community safety – the story so far

Northern Ireland has one of the most forward-looking criminal justice systems in Europe following implementation of recommendations of the Criminal Justice Review of March 2000. The Review flowed from the Belfast Agreement of 1998. It made 294 recommendations for change across the system. Key recommendations included the establishment of the Public Prosecution Service, the Youth Justice Agency, a Judicial Appointments Commission, and the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland. The Government accepted almost all the Review Recommendations. The Justice (Northern Ireland) Acts 2002 and 2004 made many of them law.

A Justice Oversight Commissioner monitored the implementation of the Review. The Commissioner, Lord Clyde left office after his sixth report in 2006, concluding that *“the changes which have been achieved over the past three years have been remarkable. There are few parts of the criminal justice system which have not been touched by them”*.

In 2003, the Government published the strategy document: *‘Creating a safer Northern Ireland through partnership’* which steered community safety development and delivery.

As part of this strategy and to co-ordinate the delivery of community safety objectives across Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Office established a Community Safety Unit (CSU) in 2003. The Community Safety Unit of the Northern Ireland Office is responsible for driving any legislative changes to help deliver community safety. This has included, for example, the introduction of anti-social behaviour orders.

The Community Safety Unit provides funding to Victim Support Northern Ireland which provides information, help and emotional support to victims and witnesses of crime. This funding ensures that services are made available to around 50,000 victims and witnesses each year. The Unit also provides core funding to Extern and NIACRO which contributes to the organisations’

headquarter salaries and running costs, building their capacity to deliver services aimed at reducing crime and re-offending.

However, community safety is not solely the responsibility of the Community Safety Unit or the NIO; it requires a range of organisations and sectors working in partnership to effectively address the issues. The Community Safety Unit has guided local agencies in the formation and development of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in every council area. These partnerships, each with a dedicated manager, are made up of local statutory, voluntary and community groups. Over the last 3 years, based on an audit of local need, each CSP developed a strategy and costed action plan and between them the 26 CSPs delivered more than 300 community safety projects addressing the spectrum of community safety issues.

CSU has taken the lead in establishing accredited training programmes in partnership with the Justice Sector Skills Council<sup>1</sup> to assist community safety practitioners in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to develop effective programmes and projects in order to deliver local community safety initiatives.

Central to community safety is putting the needs of the community first by addressing those things which make people unsafe or feel unsafe. Listening to communities helps us to ensure that services are more responsive and sensitive to their needs. Then, when initiatives are underway to address local needs, we need to better communicate this to communities to enhance confidence and reduce the fear of crime. Working together with those communities helps develop trust, creates networks, shares skills and empowers those involved in that process.

Since the launch of the first Community Safety Strategy in 2003, the criminal justice agencies and other agencies have worked together to achieve a 15%

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<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the Justice Sector Skills Council is to support employers to achieve improved productivity and business performance through skills and workforce development.

reduction in crime<sup>2</sup>. This represents an average reduction of 82 crimes a week, every week, which means that 21,352 fewer criminal acts have been perpetrated against the people of Northern Ireland during the last five years.

In addition, the Northern Ireland Office had specific targets in its Public Service Agreement (PSA) with HM Treasury to reduce domestic burglary by 15% and vehicle crime by 10% by March 2007. In fact, domestic burglary was reduced by 25% and vehicle crime by 53% against the 2001-2 baseline. In real terms, this means more than 2200 fewer homes burgled and over 8000 fewer vehicle crimes – more than 10,000 fewer crimes perpetrated during that five year period. The following provides a flavour of the work at regional and local level that contributed to that success:

### **Regional initiatives**

#### **Neighbourhood Watch**

At a strategic level, the NIO Community Safety Unit, PSNI and the Policing Board work closely to deliver projects on a regional basis across Northern Ireland. Neighbourhood Watch is one such example - the Community Safety Unit, the Policing Board and the PSNI work together to support and endorse the creation of Neighbourhood Watch schemes at a local level. CSPs and District Policing Partnerships (DPPs), performing distinct but complementary roles, monitor progress of schemes and support promotion of the schemes, of which there are now more than 360 covering over 30,000 homes – a practical example of partners working together at a strategic level, but delivered at a local level to enhance the safety of local communities – thinking globally to act locally. A recent evaluation found that these schemes can help people feel safer in their local neighbourhoods, with a greater sense of community and a perceived lower level of crime.

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<sup>2</sup> PSNI recorded crime statistics from 2002/03 to 2006/07

### **Operation Clean Up**

The Community Safety Unit, in partnership with the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Belfast City Council, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency NI, and NI Fire & Rescue Service, developed Operation Clean Up to remove untaxed cars that are often used as 'runarounds' for crime. On the ground practical assistance was provided by a range of groups, including the IMPACT project. To date over 6500 cars have been removed, and around 3500 have been destroyed.

### **Lock Out Crime Scheme and Handy Van**

The Lock Out Crime Scheme (CSU and the NI Housing Executive) and Handy Van (Help the Aged, Age Concern and CSU) are working to make homes more secure, particularly for more vulnerable older people. Around 17,000 homes of people aged 65 and over have received extra security measures.

### **Stay Safe, Stay Secure**

The Community Safety Unit has run the Stay Safe, Stay Secure publicity campaign, including unknown bogus caller TV campaign and schools poster competition, to raise awareness of home security issues.

### **Northern Ireland Domestic Violence Strategy**

The Community Safety Unit in joint lead with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, working together with all relevant government departments, statutory and voluntary agencies, developed 'Tackling Violence at Home' – A Strategy for Addressing Domestic Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland. The 5 year strategy published in 2005, is accompanied by annual action plans and aims to tackle domestic violence and abuse in the three key areas of prevention; protection and justice; and support for all victims of domestic violence. Initiatives to date have included a series of media campaigns; the provision of a 24 hour free phone domestic violence helpline; routine enquiries at maternity units; and an information leaflet for victims on how the law can help.

## **Sexual Violence and Abuse**

CSU played a key role in the development of the 5 year Regional Strategy on tackling sexual violence and abuse. This new regional strategy, a joint initiative between DHSSPS and NIO, sets out the commitment of Government and its agencies in partnership with voluntary and community sector organisations, to adopt a consistent and long-term approach to the prevention of sexual violence and abuse; and an effective and timely response when it occurs. The first year's Action Plan, which accompanies the strategy, outlines the key role CSU will play in taking forward the development of proposals to promote the personal safety of those most at risk from sexual crime.

Most significantly, the strategy heralds the creation of a Northern Ireland Sexual Assault Referral Centre, for which a project manager was appointed in the summer. A joint project involving DHSSPS, PSNI, NIO and others, the Centre will provide services on a single site that will help build the confidence of victims and yield the forensic evidence to secure more convictions.

## **Northern Ireland Inter-Ministerial Group**

As we move towards devolution a Northern Ireland Inter-Ministerial Group has been established. The new Group, which held its inaugural meeting on 21 May 2008, will co-ordinate the effort across government to ensure that domestic and sexual violence issues are integrated into the policy initiatives of all relevant government departments. The Group will ensure that annual action plans arising from both the domestic violence and sexual violence strategies are developed and implemented and that there is an annual report on progress against plans.

## **CCTV**

In September 2006 the Government announced that it would invest £2million under the 'Looking Out For You' CCTV Challenge Fund Competition. As a result of this competition 14 CCTV schemes covering 19 town centres and equating to 87 CCTV cameras will be installed across Northern Ireland. CCTV has an important role to play in creating safer communities. 'Looking Out For You' will give members of the public the reassurance that they can go

about their daily business with confidence. It will also give members of the business community additional security and in town centres across Northern Ireland it also sends a clear message to those engaged in crime and anti-social behaviour that they will be caught and they will be prosecuted.

### **Get Home Safe**

The Community Safety Unit has supported Get Home Safe in Belfast for a number of years and during this time elements of this project have been implemented across other towns to suit local circumstances. The scheme aims to reduce the incidence of late night crime and disorder, particularly alcohol related assaults. Up to 2007 the initiative has been implemented twice a year during periods when assaults tend to increase. During the most recent re-run, prior to Christmas 2007, the reported assaults in the target area reduced by 8%, when compared to the same period in the previous year.

### **Knife Amnesty**

During May and June 2006 - the Community Safety Unit, NI Policing Board, and PSNI held a Knife Amnesty with nearly 900 knives handed in during a 3 week period. This was further supported by the Department of Education funding an education programme and councils providing sites for the secure disposal units.

### **Bee Safe**

The Community Safety Unit funded the regional roll out of the Bee Safe Initiative into 23 of the 26 local council areas. This pro-active, multi-agency initiative aimed at helping primary seven children learn more about their own safety and the safety of others demonstrates CSU's partnership working with a range of organisations including NI Fire and Rescue Service, NI Electricity, local councils, PSNI, Translink (to mention but a few). Through the roll out of this initiative around 18,500 children attend Bee Safe events each year. This is made up of 29 events in 25 council areas.

### **Hate Incidents Practical Action**

A Hate Incidents Practical Action scheme jointly supported by CSU, PSNI, and the NI Housing Executive, provides personal and home protection measures where an individual has suffered a hate incident at or near their home, or where their home has been damaged as a result of an incident where the motivation of the attack is racist, sexist, disablist, sectarian or faith related.

### **Witness Services**

The Community Safety Unit has funded Victim Support to provide a Witness Service for adults in all courts and the NSPCC to provide a Young Witness Service for children in all Crown Courts, and a pilot service in Craigavon area and Belfast magistrates' and youth courts.

### **Local pilot projects**

#### **Alleygate Scheme**

The Community Safety Unit and the Department of Social Development jointly funded Belfast City Council and Bryson Charitable Group to deliver a pilot alleygating scheme, aimed at reducing domestic burglary, anti-social behaviour and improving the local environment, in five areas of Belfast. To assist other communities an alleygating manual was published. Early indications suggest local communities supported the scheme and that it had an impact on crime and fear of crime.

#### **Community Safety Wardens**

In partnership with Belfast City Council, NIHE, PSNI, the universities and others, the Community Safety Unit funded a team of Community Safety Wardens to deal with a wide range of anti-social behaviour in the Holyland area of Belfast. The success of this project has led to a similar approach in Londonderry, and Belfast City Council now also employs a team of roaming wardens for the whole city.

### **Drug arrest referral schemes**

Drug arrest referral schemes have been running successfully in Derry, Ballymena and Belfast for a number of years, funded by the Community Safety Unit and the local Health Trusts.

### **Community Television**

The Community Safety Unit funded the first Community Television network in Northern Ireland. Situated in Newry at a number of venues, this system is broadcasting useful local information, including community safety messages, national news, weather & sport, emergency messages and crime reduction initiatives to help combat crime and reduce the fear of crime within the area. The Life Channel, a similar initiative, is running in Craigavon.

### **Message in a Bottle**

The Message in a Bottle project was launched on 24 April 2007. The initiative provides a bottle which contains personal details and which the householder keeps in their fridge so that in case of an emergency, the emergency services know where to find it to be able to contact next of kin or know what medication the person is taking. This has an impact on older and vulnerable people's perceptions of their own safety. Around 100,000 bottles have been distributed across Northern Ireland.

### **Good Morning**

The Good Morning project was launched in 2002 and aims to address the concerns and fears of elderly participants with regard to crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime. In particular it provides a means of contacting those who would be considered hard to reach. There are currently over 20 independently managed local projects in operation.

### **'Racism Ruins Lives' DVD**

This Craigavon partnership initiative involving Craigavon CSP, DPP, PSNI and Borough Council attempts to raise awareness of the issue. The DVD is a practical tool for police officers and community safety practitioners to educate and inform young people about hate crime. It has been developed with a

young audience in mind, with various scenarios that initially start out as 'fun' incidents but have very serious consequences. It also includes key messages to stimulate debate in the classroom – to challenge attitudes but to do so in a safe environment.

The programmes described above demonstrate what partnership working between various statutory, voluntary and community bodies has achieved. Working in this way we can respond appropriately to the issues identified by local people and deliver sustainable solutions to local problems and regional priorities: this continues to be at the core of the government's approach to community safety.

## **Chapter 2: Community safety in the future**

### **Aim**

The overall aim for the community safety strategy is:

***To make Northern Ireland a safer place to live, work and socialise.***

The Government remains committed to local problem solving on community safety issues, and to working in partnership to respond to the issues that matter most to local people. The Community Safety Unit will continue to take the lead on setting strategic priorities to drive forward the Government's community safety agenda and this new community safety strategy will provide a strategic framework for doing so.

### **NIO Public Service Agreements 2008 - 11**

The NIO has agreed new Public Service Agreements for 2008 – 11 to deliver safer communities and justice for all. In particular this means targets to reduce anti-social behaviour by 15% by 2011 (based on 2007/2008 data); to reduce violent crimes, including hate crime, knife crime, alcohol-related violence and domestic violence; to reduce re-offending; and to increase confidence in the police and the criminal justice system. These targets will underpin the overall aim for the community safety strategy.

### **Links to other Government Departments**

The work of all government departments and agencies impacts on community safety to some degree. The contents of this strategy are closely linked with other key government strategies including:

*The New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs*

*Tackling Violence at Home*

*Bridging the Gap Between Needs and Service Delivery – a 5 year strategy for victims*

*Ageing in an Inclusive Society*

*The Clean Neighbourhoods agenda*

*People & Place - the Neighbourhood Renewal strategy*

*A Shared Future*

*Racial Equality*

*Sustainable Development*

*10 Year Strategy for Children and Young People*

*Life time Opportunities Strategy*

*The Anti-poverty Strategy*

*The Prevention of Offending*

*Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse – A Regional Strategy 2008 - 2013*

Engagement with other statutory partners and the private, voluntary and community sector is critical if we are all to deliver on our complementary agendas.

### **Changing Delivery Environment**

Community safety will be delivered in the context of an ever changing environment – the completion of devolution will be a major milestone. We must also be conscious of the potential impact of the Review of Public Administration upon the structures of CSPs. We will work to ensure that our structures and processes can adapt to change at central and local government level, to provide the best possible mechanism to seek to reduce crime, and in particular, anti-social behaviour and violent crime. This does not of course preclude local partnerships identifying opportunities to pool their expertise and resources to address specific crime and community safety issues. In many areas, this is already common practice, in other areas it is less well developed.

One of the outworkings of the Review of Public Administration is that legislation will require specified statutory agencies in each new council area to come together as a community planning partnership in order to plan and deliver the full range of services within the council boundary. The Government believes that community safety will become an integral part of community planning and will be considering what the best delivery mechanism for the future might be.

## **Community Safety Priorities for the next 3 - 5 years**

The Government's priorities for community safety over the next 3 - 5 years are built around 3 key cross-cutting themes. These are:

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

Underpinning each strand is the resolve to tackle the underlying causes and the effects of crime and anti-social behaviour in order to prevent them happening or reoccurring. Actions within each strand are not mutually exclusive and will impact positively upon the themes, creating a strong and comprehensive strategy.

In developing and delivering the strategy we need to establish a balance between the rights of victims, witnesses, offenders and communities, and to give the public a much greater personal involvement in making their communities safer.

***Q. Are the 3 themes proposed the correct ones?***

## **1. CREATING SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS**

Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour lies at the heart of community safety. Reducing crime will, by definition, make communities safer and more sustainable and reduce the number of people whose lives are affected by crime. But we must also reduce anti-social behaviour which is one of the key factors in people's perceptions of crime. Although recorded crime has reduced in Northern Ireland, many people's perceptions are that crime has actually increased: 73% of respondents to the 2006/07 Northern Ireland Crime Survey felt that crime had increased compared to two years ago and 39% of respondents felt that fear of crime adversely affected their quality of life. By tackling the range of anti-social behaviours that undermine people's quality of life and make them feel unsafe, we can improve their confidence in their communities and help reduce fear of crime.

The new Public Service Agreements designed to deliver safer communities and justice for all, include targets to reduce anti-social behaviour; to reduce violent crimes, including hate crime, knife crime, alcohol-related violence and domestic violence; to reduce re-offending; and to increase confidence in the police and the criminal justice system.

Anti-social behaviour remains a key Government priority and we have set a target to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour by 15% by 2011. This is a stretching target and one that Government cannot achieve alone. The focus is on public services delivering a better response and encouraging communities to take an active role in, and responsibility for, the safety of their area.

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 and will halt the spiral of decline by sending a clear signal that the well-being of the area and its residents matter. We cannot expect communities to have confidence in the ability of authorities to address

serious violent crime if we cannot demonstrate an ability to deal with low level crime and anti-social behaviour. Police and Planning Service will work closely together to consider the environmental aspects of crime prevention/community safety.

#### Desired outcomes

We will work towards a Northern Ireland in which crime and anti-social behaviour have declined and there is a lower rate of perception of crime, with more people feeling safe in their neighbourhoods and town centres. We will reduce the number of anti-social behaviour incidents by 15% between 2008 and 2011, and reduce serious violent crime.

#### New powers

We have already commenced legislation to help reduce knife crime on 1 October 2007, raising the legal age for purchasing a knife or a crossbow from 16 to 18 years. Under the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 police officers will be empowered to seize vehicles (including quads, scramblers and mini motos) that are used in an anti-social manner. The Order also contains powers to enable test purchasing for alcohol.

However, there are legislative gaps where new powers could enable agencies to deal more effectively with crime and anti-social behaviour. During 2008 the NIO consulted on Alternatives to Prosecution including a range of fixed penalty notices and penalty notices for disorder and will be considering how to take this work forward in light of responses. Other new powers could include:

- A statutory underpinning for information sharing for the purposes of preventing, detecting, or responding to crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.
- The power to close premises which are causing significant, persistent and serious nuisance to local communities

## Noise Nuisance

Noise nuisance is a significant quality of life issue for many communities and we propose:

- Encouraging councils to adopt the provisions in the Noise Act 1996 to enable them to tackle night time noise nuisance and seize equipment used anti-socially. Only Belfast City Council has adopted these provisions to date. [CSU through SOLACE]

Other powers may also be central to creating safer neighbourhoods. These may include:

- Enabling the police to designate dispersal zones in areas that have suffered significant and persistent anti-social behaviour
- Designating 'disorder zones'<sup>3</sup> where the council or Community Safety Partnership identifies the action required to address particular crime, disorder or anti-social behaviour problems and could charge those with a responsibility – such as landlords of licensed premises, landlords of tenanted properties (eg in the Holyland), or businesses in a town centre - and the revenue could be used to fund extra policing, cleaning or whatever action would address the problems in the 'disorder zone'.

***Q. Are the powers proposed appropriate?***

***Q. Are there other powers which would assist agencies to tackle environmental crime and anti-social behaviour more effectively and make neighbourhoods safer and if so, what?***

## Environmental improvements

The Department of the Environment's clean neighbourhoods agenda recognises the links between low level environmental quality, anti-social behaviour, crime and deprivation of neighbourhoods. The range of local environmental quality issues covered by the clean neighbourhoods agenda include:

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<sup>3</sup> See Annex A

- Alleygating (to prevent the anti-social or criminal use of shared spaces behind houses and to reclaim these areas for residents and increase their sense of safety and reduce fear of crime)
- Litter (including discarded chewing gum and cigarette butts)
- Graffiti and fly-posting
- Abandoned vehicles and nuisance parking

Physical environmental improvements can be a relatively straightforward way to make communities feel safer. We propose:

- Working with local councils and others to deliver visible environmental improvements to make people safer and feel safer [CSU, DoE, with SOLACE]
- Working with the PSNI, housing providers and town planners to ‘design out’ crime in new and existing developments [PSNI, NIHE, Planning Service, NI Federation of Housing Association, Chartered Institute of Housing]
- Engaging with local communities to work towards the removal of intimidating murals, flags and other symbols of paramilitary control [NIO and OFMDFM]
- Continuing the roll out of a £2 million programme of town centre CCTV provision in 19 locations across Northern Ireland. [CSU]
- Identifying ways to remove abandoned cars more quickly and efficiently [CSU with PSNI, DVLA and councils]
- Supporting councils in taking action against litter and fly-tipping [DoE]

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

#### Policing & emergency services

Our emergency services perform critical roles in delivering community safety, not only in dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour, but also in providing reassurance by their visible presence. We support the PSNI and NI Policing

Board's commitment to neighbourhood policing, as set out in the Policing Plan. We support the establishment of more community safety warden schemes like those in Belfast and Londonderry to provide an extra presence to deal with community safety issues and provide reassurance to communities. [CSPs, councils, PSNI]

Unfortunately our emergency services can come under attack whilst performing the duties that help keep us safe. As such we will work with the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety to identify the best ways to protect emergency services workers. [CSU, NIO, DHSSPS]

***Q. How can we improve the protection available to our emergency services workers? Please outline.***

#### Night-time economy

Over recent years we have seen the growth of a vibrant night-time economy in a number of towns in Northern Ireland. While this brings many benefits, including the creation of jobs and income from tourism, we must ensure that everyone can feel safe to enjoy socialising in our cities and towns. Current measures include Get Home Safe schemes with associated training for door and bar staff, removal of hot food vans, and a media advertising campaign; the SOS Bus providing support to those who are vulnerable in Belfast city centre on weekend nights; and taxi marshalling schemes. We propose:

- Working with others to improve the management of the night-time economy in our town and city centres [CSU, CSPs, Federation of Retail Licensed Trade, councils, drinks industry, Translink and taxi operators]
- Identifying good practice from Get Home Safe schemes and extend these to towns with a significant night-time economy [CSU & CSPs]

***Q. What else can we do to make our town centres safer and more attractive at night? Please outline suggestions.***

### Physical security measures

CSU has funded a number of successful physical security measures with other partners, for instance Lock Out Crime Scheme, Operation Clean Up, Handy Van, and alleygating. We propose to build on the success of these schemes by:

- Improving the Hate Incidents Practical Action (HIPA) scheme to identify the most appropriate practical actions to prevent hate crimes and to support victims [CSU, with PSNI, NIHE and voluntary organisations]
- Promoting good practice through the use of RadioLink schemes for both the day and night-time economies [CSU through CSPs, and PSNI]
- Developing and promoting initiatives to tackle business crime [CSU and partners eg PSNI, Association of Town Centre Managers, Chambers of Commerce]

***Q. Are these the right measures?***

***Q. How can we make our town centres safer and more attractive during the daytime? Please outline suggestions.***

***Q. Are there others we should be considering? If so, please outline.***

## 2. FOCUS ON FAMILIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A small number of households are often at the centre of a high proportion of criminal activity and anti-social behaviour which undermines the quality of life of whole communities. We want to support these families to break the cycle of poor parenting and lack of opportunity, in order to improve the lives of all citizens and promote social inclusion and reduce offending and re-offending. Central to this is creating opportunities which offer people alternatives to becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour, challenging unacceptable behaviour, and providing support to keep people out of the criminal justice system. The reducing offending strategy will have a relevance to this work.

### Desired outcomes

Our vision for Northern Ireland is that in 5 years time there will be a reduction in the number of people, including young people, offending and becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour as well as a reduction in re-offending. We want young people and their families to recognise the potential consequences of the choices they make.

The NIO has a key performance indicator in the *Make Communities Safer* Public Service Agreement to reduce re-offending. The following targets have been set:

- to reduce the number of proven offences committed by re-offenders by 10% between 2005 and 2011.
- the number of proven serious offences committed by re-offenders should reduce between 2005 and 2011.

The NIO also has a further key performance indicator in *Make Communities Safer* to reduce the number of anti-social behaviour incidents by 15% by March 2011. Under the Public Service Agreement *Justice for All* it also has a

key performance indicator to increase confidence in the criminal justice system.

### New powers

Some formal powers<sup>4</sup> may be useful to require individuals to accept support to address the underlying causes of their problem behaviour to prevent its repetition or to face up to their responsibilities as parents. Potential options include:

- Individual support orders to require both adults and young people who have been made subject to an anti-social behaviour order to accept support tailored to addressing the underlying causes of their anti-social behaviour
- Parenting support orders to require parents to accept support to improve their parenting skills and take responsibility for their children's behaviour
- Piloting parental compensation orders so that parents are made financially responsible for the damage caused by their children aged under 10

***Q. Would these powers be suitable for offering people a way out of offending? Please define any others which may be appropriate.***

***Q. Are there advantages to bringing in legislation to introduce parenting support orders to Northern Ireland? If yes, please define.***

### Early intervention

A number of interconnecting factors can lead young people to offending or anti-social behaviour which can ruin their life chances and create misery for those living around them. If we are to prevent young people from becoming offenders it is, of course, much better to head off any problem behaviour early

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<sup>4</sup> See Annex A

and make them aware of their responsibility for their own behaviour and how it impacts on those around them. The Youth Justice Agency (YJA) has done considerable work in this field and Northern Ireland's innovative Youth Conference Service is a world leader in bringing young people face to face with the victims of their crimes. There is a growing body of evidence that this type of restorative approach and diversionary work is particularly successful in keeping young people away from further criminal or anti-social behaviour.

The Youth Justice Agency will continue to develop a prevention of offending strategy with statutory and voluntary partners in Children and Young People's Committees in each of the four Health and Social Service Board areas. This strategy emphasises the significance of education, health, employment opportunities, inclusion or family support in promoting positive outcomes for children and families. There is also the Agency's *Reducing Re-offending, A framework for practice* document which directs work in this area.

In addition to this, citizenship education is currently being introduced as a compulsory part of the revised curriculum for all young people from Year 1 onwards. This will help our young people to develop positive relationships with others, develop strategies to promote their own personal safety, be aware of their rights and responsibilities, develop themselves as members of a community, understand that all choices have consequences and understand the importance of rules and laws and the consequences of breaching these, including the effects of anti-social behaviour.

Building on these successes and developments, we propose the following options for timely intervention:

- Investing in diversionary activities for young people, particularly those at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour [CSU through CSPs]
- Developing mentoring schemes - eg through sports clubs or peer mentoring or through community based volunteer development schemes [DCAL, voluntary organisations]

- Developing sustainable intergenerational projects that address older person's perceptions of the fear of crime and encourage the younger generation to view old age positively [CSU through CSPs, YJA, voluntary organisations].

***Q. How can we best divert young people from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour? Please outline approach.***

#### Supporting families

The Youth Justice Agency has a history of operating parent support groups which have proved to be a valuable tool in building confidence, restoring relationships and providing support for individual parents. It is in all our interests to continue to deal with this behaviour and so we propose:

- Introducing family support panels – multi-agency expertise on practical action to deal with the most troublesome families for the benefit of the community and the family concerned. This may require intensive family intervention projects for the most challenging cases. [CSU with other agencies eg PSNI, NIHE, social services]
- Developing models of good practice for youth diversionary initiatives aimed at reducing the impact of anti-social behaviour [CSU, YJA]
- Working with Drug and Alcohol Co-ordinating Teams to address substance abuse issues in families.

***Q. How do we best make support available to parents?***

#### Supporting the rehabilitation of offenders

We have outlined above how we intend to reduce the number of people, particularly young people, entering the criminal justice system, but we are also committed to reducing re-offending by helping those already involved in crime to break out of the offending cycle. Families have a critical role to play in providing the essential support and links which can cement the rehabilitation process and our proposals above will reinforce the importance of positive

parenting. In addition to this, we propose to offer support and alternatives to offending which include:

- Building on the success of drug arrest referral schemes which provide the support necessary for offenders to “kick their habit” and consequently reduce their offending, and implement new schemes in areas where a need is identified and justified by the scale of the problem [CSU, PSNI, Youth Justice Agency, PBNI, DHSSPS, community and voluntary organisations]
- Continuing to strategically invest in Extern and NIACRO to enable them to deliver services that support the objectives of the criminal justice system [CSU]
- Improving the services and programmes available to rehabilitate offenders and reduce re-offending [PBNI, NI Prison Service, NIACRO]

***Q. Are these proposals likely to assist in reducing offending and /or re-offending?***

***Q. Are there other ways to support, and provide services to, those who have been involved in crime and anti-social behaviour to tackle the causes of crime and prevent them re-offending? If so, please outline.***

### **3. BUILDING STRONG, CONFIDENT COMMUNITIES**

Our communities should have confidence in themselves and the agencies which serve them. Fear of crime can undermine communities. To reduce it we must increase confidence in the individual agencies responsible for community safety and the criminal justice system as a whole, as well as encouraging reporting of incidents and ensuring that effective action is taken. This is particularly important for the more vulnerable members of our society as recent years have seen significant increases in hate crimes. For example, in 2001/02 there were 185 racial incidents and 40 homophobic incidents recorded by the police. By 2006/07 these figures had increased to 1,047 and 155 respectively. Additionally, in 2006/07 there were 1,695 sectarian incidents, 136 faith/religion incidents and 48 disability incidents recorded by the PSNI (this was the second year these three categories were recorded).

#### Desired outcomes

Our vision for 2012 is a Northern Ireland where the NI Crime Survey measures a reduction in the perception of crime since 2007-8, and communities are increasingly self-confident and confident in the local agencies that serve them. The *Justice for All* Public Service Agreement contains targets to increase public confidence in the criminal justice system and victim and witness satisfaction with criminal justice agencies and process. The *Make Communities Safer* PSA has targets to increase confidence in policing and the levels of police-community engagement.

#### Supporting victims and witnesses

It is vital that we take action to protect and support victims and witnesses of crime and anti-social behaviour. The NIO's *Bridging the Gap Between Needs and Service Delivery – a 5 year strategy for victims* was published in September 2007, and to underpin it, we propose:

- Increasing the level and standard of support available to victims and witnesses of crime and anti-social behaviour through the dedicated Victims

& Witnesses Strategy [NIO, CSU, Victim Support NI, PSNI, NI Courts Service, NSPCC]

- Continuing to strategically invest in the voluntary sector to support victims and witnesses of crime [CSU]
- Rolling out Witness Support Services (for children) into magistrates', youth and county courts and the Court of Appeal [NSPCC supported by CSU]
- Developing enhanced reporting mechanisms for victims and witnesses of hate incidents. [CSU, PSNI and voluntary organisations]
- Developing a template protocol for sharing information with voluntary agencies to facilitate supporting victims and witnesses of crime and anti-social behaviour [CSU with PSNI and voluntary agencies]

***Q. Are the proposals the correct way forward?***

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

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

#### Empowering communities

Whilst the government, statutory agencies, and voluntary agencies all have a critical role to play in making Northern Ireland safer, communities themselves are a vital part of the solution. By working together they can identify solutions. The implementation of the PSNI Neighbourhood Policing Recommendations has a key role in this area. In particular community engagement will take place in each neighbourhood under the Partners and Community Together initiative, known as PACT. Neighbourhood consultative forums will be established within each neighbourhood at which all partners will be equal. To fulfil the aim of building strong, confident communities we propose:

- Expanding and developing Watch schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch, School Watch, Campus Watch and Business Watch in partnership with PSNI and the Northern Ireland Policing Board. [CSU, PSNI, Policing Board]

- Initiating award schemes to recognise achievements in areas of community safety, eg Taking A Stand (anti-social behaviour), A Good Night Out (safer night-time economy), Safer Shopping [CSU]
- Supporting the roll out of Bee Safe [OFMDFM]
- Community payback - using offenders with community sentences to undertake reparative work for the benefit of and decided on by the local community. [CSU, YJA, PBNI]
- Working with Crimestoppers to increase reporting and detection of crime

***Q. How can we better empower communities to engage in community safety initiatives?***

***Q. Should we introduce community payback?***

***Q. How can we facilitate communities inputting to this process?***

#### Raising awareness

Taking action against crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour is the bedrock of community safety. However, much of the impact is lost if people are not made aware of what has been done to protect and support them. We will encourage local agencies to feed back their success stories to the people in their areas. In addition we propose:

- Exploring the potential for piloting a dedicated helpline in certain areas to report anti-social behaviour, and feedback on action taken [CSU]
- Improving provision of information to practitioners and the public on community safety through the CSU website:  
[www.communitysafetyni.gov.uk](http://www.communitysafetyni.gov.uk) [CSU]

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

***Q. How can we encourage more people to report crime and anti-social behaviour?***

### Improving public services

Delivering safer communities is a challenge for all public authorities and the response varies across Northern Ireland. We can learn from those areas of the country, and from other jurisdictions, where community safety problems are dealt with effectively. Key to improving public services is ensuring that Community Safety Partnerships have the skills and capacity to deliver change on the ground and are accountable not just to the Community Safety Unit but, more importantly, to the people they serve. To improve the response to community safety issues throughout Northern Ireland we propose:

- Providing appropriate training for key staff, and developing skills within communities – for example cross-agency ‘academies’ on specific community safety issues such as anti-social behaviour, business crime, alcohol disorder, domestic violence [CSU and other criminal justice agencies]
- Working to ensure that community safety is embedded in the activities of all responsible agencies across the whole of Northern Ireland by promoting partnership working, and through legislation akin to that in s17 Crime & Disorder Act 1998<sup>5</sup> [CSU]

### Supporting the particularly vulnerable

Some sections of our society, for example older people or members of ethnic minority communities, are more vulnerable to the effects of crime and anti-social behaviour than the rest of the population. Hate crime has no place in our society and we are currently joint funding research into disability hate crime in order to inform and shape our response to these issues.

The CSU consulted on the *Government’s proposals for the Safety of Older People* in 2007 and the responses received are being used to form an action plan to deal specifically with the many issues that the older community encounter.

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<sup>5</sup> See Annex A

To support the most vulnerable in our society we propose:

- Continuing to address domestic violence under the *Tackling Violence at Home* strategy and action plans. [CSU and DHSSPS]
- Continuing to address sexual violence under *Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse* [ CSU and DHSSPS]
- Finding ways to continue to improve the court experience for victims of domestic violence and of sexual violence, building on existing provision. For example, there is a DVD and information leaflet which explains how the law can help victims of domestic violence. Consideration is currently being given to piloting an Integrated Family Court.
- Working with partner organisations to address the issue of elder abuse with proposals including the use of a dedicated helpline. [CSU, PSNI, DHSSPS and OFMDFM]
- Progressing the outcome of the consultation on the safety of older people including intergenerational and reassurance outreach projects. [NIO, other government departments, PSNI, NIHE and voluntary groups]
- Promoting and developing schemes that help reduce fear of crime such as Neighbourhood Watch [CSU, NIPB, PSNI and CSPs]
- Addressing hate crime through the provision of practical assistance through the Hate Incidents Practical Action scheme; working to encourage the reporting of hate incidents and supporting programmes to promote diversity and better integration of minority groups within majority communities [CSU, PPS, PSNI, voluntary organisations]
- Tackling the underlying factors which lead to people becoming part of the sex trade such as substance misuse, domestic abuse, homelessness, or sex trafficking in order to help them leave the industry [PSNI, voluntary organisations, DHSSPS, DSD, NIHE]

***Q. Are the proposals appropriate?***

***Q. What would help to improve the court experience for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence?***

***Q. What other action can we take to help particularly vulnerable members of our community feel safer?***

## **Chapter 3: Delivery**

These themes cannot be delivered by the Community Safety Unit or any other agency acting alone. Partnership working is the key. The responsibility for creating a safer Northern Ireland does not lie within one agency, but with all of us. As such, these proposals will be delivered by the Community Safety Unit, other government departments, local Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), and through other partners such as PSNI, NI Housing Executive, the Youth Justice Agency, the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the Northern Ireland Prison Service, the Probation Board, NI Court Service, District Policing Partnerships who have a distinct but complementary role to CSPs, voluntary organisations, and others. These links already exist through Ministerial groups and various community safety fora. We will also continue to benchmark with colleagues in Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland and beyond.

To further support Community Safety Partnerships, the Community Safety Unit will, together with key stakeholders, develop a set of national standards to which each CSP will be required to comply. These standards may include:

- Requiring senior representation from the key responsible authorities for the purpose of strategic decision making and committing resources
- An effective business process for gathering information and intelligence about local community safety problems, making strategic assessments, and developing action plans
- Information sharing protocols with nominated liaison officers to facilitate and oversee the appropriate collection, use and sharing of information between partners
- Consultation with diverse groups within the community with results fed into setting priorities, and appropriate feedback to the community.

### **Information gathering & sharing**

It is essential that agencies work together to deliver safer communities as no single agency can succeed alone. To facilitate this we propose:

- Improving information sharing between statutory agencies to tackle crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour<sup>6</sup> [CSU]
- Developing a protocol to make it easier for agencies to share information about the small number of persistent and prolific offenders who cause a disproportionate volume of crime in order to tackle them more effectively [NIO, CSU]

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

### **Research and planning**

The Community Safety Unit will work with partners to recognise and identify emerging community safety trends in order to tackle them before they become serious issues. This will involve identifying underlying factors and linkages and with the Community Safety Partnerships and other partners we will investigate the potential for mapping crime and anti-social behaviour hotspots across all responsible agencies [CSU and CSPs]

### **Funding**

In order to deliver this strategy, the NIO Community Safety Unit has secured £18m to address community safety at a regional and local level over the next 3 years. Funding has been allocated to each Community Safety Partnership to meet these priorities and they will be accountable to the Community Safety Unit for the spending of their allocation. Part of the financial package for each community safety partnership will be ring fenced to fund a community safety manager post.

### **Measuring performance**

Evaluation of Community Safety Partnerships' performance, programmes and projects will continue to be an integral part of community safety. These will be linked to the NIO's public service agreements, in particular the key

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<sup>6</sup> See Annex A

performance indicators on anti-social behaviour and violent crime. Key Performance Indicators will be developed and agreed with CSPs and performance and delivery will be evaluated. The annual NIO Departmental Report will record progress and achievements.

***Q. How can we best inform the public about performance?***

## **GLOSSARY**

### **Business improvement districts**

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are locally controlled partnerships for improving the environment and economic performance of a defined area. They are created by groups of businesses to oversee and fund environmental improvements and the provision of a limited number of additional or enhanced local services.

### **Closure of premises causing a significant, persistent & serious nuisance**

This would allow the police in consultation with the council, and NIHE where their property is affected, to obtain a court order to close and seal any residential or licensed property, regardless of tenure, which is causing significant, persistent and serious nuisance to local communities for a specified temporary period

### **Dispersal zones**

These would allow a senior police officer (of the rank of Superintendent or above) who has reasonable grounds to believe that the public has been intimidated, harassed, alarmed or distressed by the presence or behaviour of groups of 2 or more people in public areas in a locality; and that anti-social behaviour is a significant and persistent problem in that area, after consultation with the council (and perhaps NIHE where the anti-social behaviour is affecting one of their estates), to designate the area as a dispersal zone for a maximum period of 6 months. The designation of a dispersal zone must be publicised in the local area.

Once a zone is designated a constable can disperse groups of 2 or more persons within that zone where he has reasonable grounds that their presence or behaviour has resulted or is likely to result in the public being intimidated, harassed, alarmed or distressed. The constable can also require those not from the area to leave the area and prohibit their return within 24

hours. Between 9pm and 6am the constable may also take a child under the age of 16 home or to another safe place.

Failure to follow the constable's directions would be a criminal offence.

### **Drug Arrest Referral Schemes**

A dedicated drugs worker, working in a police custody suite, makes contact with those arrested for acquisitive crime and if appropriate refers them to appropriate treatment to address their drug use with the aim of reducing their drug related offending. Involvement with the scheme is voluntary and it is not an alternative to prosecution or due process.

### **Duty on specified agencies to consider the impact of their functions on crime, disorder, community safety and anti-social behaviour and to share information**

This would be similar to section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and would require the named bodies, eg councils, Police, NIHE, Education & Library Boards, NI Fire & Rescue Service, Social Services, as well as government departments, to mainstream tackling crime and disorder etc into every aspect of their work. This would also provide a solid legal basis for these agencies, particularly those like NIHE whose major role is not dealing with these issues, to use their resources to deal with crime and disorder issues in situations for which they have a responsibility.

This would be supplemented with a duty to disclose to all other named relevant authorities any information of a nature prescribed by the Secretary of State (ie relating to the reduction of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour). But this would not require a relevant authority to disclose any personal data (within the meaning of the Data Protection Act 1998).

### **Family Intervention Projects**

Family intervention projects work to help families change their behaviours and reduce their impact on their community. In so doing, they also bring stability to families' lives, prevent homelessness and improve opportunities for children.

They combine intensive support with focused challenge. Support and enforcement are systematically linked to provide families with the incentive to change. A contract is drawn up between the family and key worker which sets out the changes that are expected, the support that will be provided in order to facilitate that change and the consequences if changes are not made, or tasks are not undertaken. Taking a whole family approach, they are intensely practical projects which focus on providing a structure for those living in chaotic circumstances

### **Individual support orders**

An individual support order would be a civil order made alongside an anti-social behaviour order to compel the individual with the anti-social behaviour order to accept tailored support to address the underlying causes of their anti-social behaviour in the interests of preventing reoccurrence of this behaviour.

This may for example require the person to attend anger management classes or undertake counselling for alcohol or substance misuse where these are a causal factor in their anti-social behaviour. The individual support order would run for a maximum of 6 months from the start of the anti-social behaviour order, and a further order could be sought from the court later during the duration of the anti-social behaviour order if the individual required further support.

Compliance with the individual support order will be managed by a responsible officer who could be from Probation for an adult or the Youth Justice Agency for a young person.

### **Information sharing**

This would be a statutory underpinning to how statutory agencies share information on a similar sort of basis as under section 115 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 allowing any person (who might otherwise have no power to do so) to disclose information to a relevant authority (or a person acting on their behalf) for the purposes of preventing, detecting, or responding to crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

“Relevant authority” for the purpose of information sharing could include PSNI, NIHE, councils, PBNI, Health & Social Services Boards, Housing Associations, the Youth Justice Agency, Community Safety Partnership Managers and the NI Fire and Rescue Service.

### **Parental Compensation Order**

The Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 provides that a magistrates' court will be able to make a parental compensation order (PCO), on the application of a person specified by the Secretary of State, where it is satisfied to the civil standard of proof that a child under the age of 10 has taken or caused loss or damage to property in the course of behaving anti-socially or committing an act that would have been criminal if he or she were 10 or over, and where making the order would be desirable in the interests of preventing a repetition of the behaviour in question. The order will require the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) to pay compensation to any person or persons affected by the taking of the property or by its loss or damage. The amount of compensation specified may not exceed £5,000 in all.

### **Parenting Support Contracts**

Parenting support contracts need not be set out in legislation. They could operate informally like acceptable behaviour contracts. A parenting support contract would be a signed voluntary agreement between, for example, the Youth Justice Agency and parents whose children are behaving in a problem manner (crime, anti-social behaviour). The parent would agree to comply with the terms of the contract and the other party would agree to provide support for the purpose of complying with the requirements.

Such requirements might include attending a guidance or counselling programme. The purpose of the contract is to assist the parent to improve their child's behaviour, or prevent criminal or anti-social behaviour. Non-compliance could be taken into account when a parenting support order is sought.

### **Parenting support orders**

Parenting support orders would be civil orders made by a criminal, family or magistrates' (acting in its civil capacity) court requiring parents whose children (under 18 years old) have been convicted of an offence or received an anti-social behaviour order, to undertake tailored support to improve their parenting skills in the interests of preventing their children repeating the behaviour. Non compliance with a voluntary parenting support contract could be taken into account when a parenting support order is sought.

Legislation could also provide for applications for free-standing parenting support orders by the Youth Justice Agency where a young person has been referred to them for being involved in crime or anti-social behaviour; or by the PSNI, NIHE and council where a child has been behaving anti-socially. All applicants would be required to consult with the YJA prior to their application.

The court would appoint a responsible officer who may be from Probation, social services or the Youth Justice Agency to manage the order. The maximum duration of the order would be 12 months, including 3 months counselling.

### **RadioLink**

RadioLink schemes link local businesses, shops and pubs, via a high tech two-way digital radio monitored by the police. Incidents of shoplifting or other anti-social behaviour can be reported instantly and, within moments of such a report, everyone on the network can be aware of potential trouble-makers.

### **Taxi marshalling**

This involves a supervisor for a taxi rank to ensure the safety of those waiting and also, where possible, to organise sharing of taxis to cut the queue.

### **Test purchasing**

This allows police to test for sales of alcohol to minors. Under the direction of a police officer acting in the course of his or her duty, a person under 18 may enter licensed premises to seek to purchase alcohol.

## EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

### **Northern Ireland Act 1998**

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Northern Ireland Office in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- 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.

In addition, the NIO must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

***Q. 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?***

***Q. 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 and how might we mitigate against this adverse impact?***

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

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

## **HOW TO RESPOND TO THIS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

This consultation document seeks views on the proposals detailed above. Specific points on which comments are sought are set out throughout the main text and Annex B.

**The consultation period ends at 16:00 on 19 January 2009 and all responses must be received in writing by then.**

Responses to this consultation should be emailed to:

[csuconsultation@nio.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:csuconsultation@nio.x.gsi.gov.uk)

Or, alternatively, sent to:

Strategy Consultation  
Community Safety Unit  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor Millennium House  
Great Victoria Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7AQ

Fax number: 028 9082 8556

Text phone: 028 9052 7668

Individual responses will not be acknowledged. Respondents should indicate clearly where they are responding on behalf of a group or organisation.

Unless confidentiality is explicitly requested, your response may be made available to others and may be published in a summary of responses to the consultation.

An electronic version of this document is available to view and download from the Community Safety Unit website ([www.communitysafetyni.gov.uk](http://www.communitysafetyni.gov.uk)), the Criminal Justice System Northern Ireland website ([www.cjsni.gov.uk](http://www.cjsni.gov.uk)) and the NIO website ([www.nio.gov.uk](http://www.nio.gov.uk)). Hard copies will be posted on request.

### **Alternative formats**

The text phone contact details are provided above. Copies in various other formats, including large print, Braille, audio cassette, computer disk etc may be made available on request. If you wish to access the document in an alternative format or language, please let us know and we will do our best to assist you.