BUILDING SAFER, SHARED AND CONFIDENT COMMUNITIES

A Community Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2012-2017

DRAFT March 2012

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

I am pleased to publish *'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities'* on behalf of the Executive.

This Strategy provides the overall direction for community safety in Northern Ireland, and will help guide the work of a range of stakeholders including the Executive, local government, the voluntary and community sector and local communities.   It contains over 70 commitments that reflect the issues that communities told us needed to be tackled, to be delivered between now and 2017.

The document sets out my vision of a safer, shared and cohesive Northern Ireland with less crime and anti-social behaviour, and where people have confidence in the agencies that work on their behalf.

Addressing the challenges of crime, disorder and the fear that communities face in towns and villages across Northern Ireland cannot be achieved by the Department of Justice or the justice system alone; the Executive recognises that many Departments have a role to play in making our communities safer.

This document is an important part of my wider reforms to build a justice system that works for and is accountable to local communities. I will be publishing a Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending by the end of 2012, which will fundamentally reshape our approach to tackling the problems that lead people into the criminal justice system, and which hinder them from getting back out of it when they do. "Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities" also aligns with and complements a range of other reforms around youth justice, prisons, speeding up justice and victims and witnesses, all of which taken together will meet my vision of a fair, just and safer community.

This Strategy has been developed following extensive consultation with key stakeholders and with local communities. I heard first hand from communities in villages, towns and cities across Northern Ireland about the issues that mattered to

them on community safety; many highlighted the need to address the common disorder and anti-community activity that affects their daily lives. The single biggest message from communities was that government must work more effectively together and on behalf of communities to build safer neighbourhoods.

The establishment of new Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSP) at council level will provide new opportunities for statutory agencies, local political leaders, voluntary and community groups and local communities to work together to tackle these issues and to build safer communities.

Building upon the success of Community Safety Partnerships and District Policing Partnerships, PCSPs will play a key role in delivery of community safety at community level. They will work with local communities to develop and tailor innovative solutions to fit local needs.

Much progress has been made in reducing crime, tackling anti-social behaviour and building confidence in the justice system. I am committed to building on that success in the years ahead at strategic and local levels. Whilst this document provides a roadmap for community safety in the years ahead, it must be supported by delivery and action at all levels. I, along with my Executive colleagues, am committed to ensuring that the Strategy will help to deliver safer, shared and confident communities.

DAVID FORD MLA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1.   'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities' sets the direction for reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in Northern Ireland over the next five years. It builds on the positive progress made in recent years in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, both by continuing to focus on what works, as well as a stronger emphasis on the guiding principle that prevention is better than cure.

2.   Success in building safer communities is beyond the ability of the justice system alone, and requires a partnership approach within and across Government. As an Executive-wide response, this Strategy seeks to bring together government departments in addressing the wider issues linked to crime and anti-social behaviour.

3.   The Strategy contributes to the Programme for Government priority to create safer communities and aligns with a wide range of Executive policies and strategies including community relations, neighbourhood renewal, children and young people, and alcohol and drugs.

4.   'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities' is an integral part of the Justice Minister's ambition to build a fair, just and safer community. It should be read alongside other policies and reviews including the Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending, the new Victims and Witnesses Strategy[1] and reviews of Youth Justice and the Prison Service.

5.   Whilst greater partnership across government is important, community safety is about building community confidence and ensuring local solutions to local issues of concern. The new Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) will be central to delivering community safety locally, and will work with communities to

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[1] Under development at time of publication

deliver local solutions, to make people feel safer and ensure that the voices of local people on community safety are heard.

6.   The Strategy has been developed following comprehensive engagement and consultation and reflects the views of local communities and organisations involved in the delivery of community safety across Northern Ireland.

Aims

7.   The overall aim of the Community Safety Strategy, as endorsed during the consultation, is to help build:

- o **Safer communities,** *with lower levels of crime and anti-social behaviour;*
- o **Shared communities***, where each person's rights are respected in a shared and cohesive community; and*
- o **Confident communities***, where people feel safe and have confidence in the agencies that serve them.*

Safer Communities

8.   Northern Ireland is a safe place to live, with falling levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in recent years. However, crime and the fear of crime remain an important issue for many communities, and evidence shows that the risk of individuals becoming involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour can be increased by factors such as childhood or family background, experience of economic and social deprivation and addiction issues.

9.   *We will increase our focus on prevention rather than cure, by intervening earlier to reduce the risk of people, particularly young people, coming into contact with the justice system, and to support them away from offending and reoffending.* There was strong support for this approach from the

public consultation, and success will require a partnership approach across government, with the third sector and local communities.

10.   To build **safer communities** *with lower levels of crime and anti-social behaviour* we will:

- Intervene earlier to reduce the risk of individuals being drawn into offending;
- Reduce the level of alcohol and drug related crime by supporting individuals who face addiction and substance misuse;
- Tackle domestic and sexual violence;
- Continue to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour in local communities through targeted programmes delivered regionally and locally;
- Increase safety in our town and city centres, and help make our rural communities safer.

Shared Communities

11.   The Community Safety Strategy will contribute to the wider Executive's Cohesion, Sharing and Integration policy when agreed. Northern Ireland remains a divided society and is becoming a more diverse one as a result of migration over the past decade. Community division creates tensions and prejudice and can lead to criminal behaviour both at interfaces and more widely. Each incident increases the risk of many more. ***In line with the prevention approach we will work with communities and across government to tackle the problems at source.***

12.   To build **shared communities** *where each person's rights are respected in a shared and cohesive community* we will:

- Work closely with local communities and across government to address community safety issues at interfaces;
- Seek agreement with local communities to reduce the number of interface structures;

- Tackle all forms of hate crime through prevention, awareness and education and support victims and communities.

Confident Communities

13.   Despite the reductions in levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in recent years, fear of crime continues to be an issue of real concern for many communities. Communities already make a major contribution to community safety, and the introduction of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships will enable them to identify local issues and deliver local solutions in partnership with central and local government and the voluntary and community sector. ***We will build public confidence in the police and agencies that work to improve community safety and in turn foster greater community participation and engagement with those agencies, promoting community cohesion and helping people to feel safe.***

14.   To build **confident communities** *where people feel safe and have confidence in the agencies that serve them* we will:
- Support PCSPs to enable local communities to identify the issues that matter locally and develop solutions;
- Reduce fear of crime and help people feel safer through regional and local programmes to increase trust and confidence;
- Give confidence to individuals to report crime to PSNI and others where appropriate, such as Crimestoppers.

Delivery

15.   The Strategy will be implemented and monitored at strategic level by relevant Departments and agencies, and locally through Policing and Community Safety Partnerships. An implementation plan will detail the steps to be taken to deliver on the outcomes at strategic level.

16.   The Strategy includes a suite of indicators, to be used to measure progress in achieving the outcomes.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1   Crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear it can cause are important issues of concern to local communities and wider society. Much progress has been made over the past decade, and Northern Ireland is one of the safest places to live in Europe, with levels of crime and anti-social behaviour falling in recent years[1].

1.2   Despite this downward trend, crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear it creates continue to have a damaging impact on victims, their families, local communities and wider society. Unless it is effectively addressed, crime and anti-social behaviour can affect people's physical and mental health and quality of life, lead to social isolation and fear, and damage the economic wellbeing of towns, city centres and rural communities alike.

1.3   *'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities'* is an Executive Strategy that sets the direction for government over the next five years for reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in Northern Ireland. It reflects the views heard during an extensive engagement and consultation[2] with individuals, communities and organisations across Northern Ireland. The overall aim of the Strategy, as endorsed during the consultation, is to help build:

- *Safer communities, with lower levels of crime and anti-social behaviour;*
- *Shared communities, where each person's rights are respected in a shared and cohesive community; and*
- *Confident communities, where people feel safe and have confidence in the agencies that serve them.*

1.4   Building on the progress made over the past decade, this Strategy sets the direction for community safety over the next five years. It is part of wider efforts to build a safer society by addressing the underlying causes and drivers of crime and anti-social behaviour, and is focused mainly on preventing offending and addressing the impact it has on communities.

1.5   The causes of crime and anti-social behaviour are often complex and varied. Offending behaviour can be influenced by a range of individual, family and community risk factors, such as a lack of educational attainment, deprivation and poverty, poor parenting, substance misuse and mental health issues.

1.6   There is recognition across government that a greater focus on and investment in early intervention can reduce those risk factors and promote positive outcomes around health and wellbeing, education, poverty, community safety and offending and reoffending. Addressing these wider social determinants of crime and reducing offending requires a partnership approach across government.

1.7   This document sets the strategic direction for community safety in Northern Ireland over the next five years. It builds on the opportunities for greater partnership working at regional and local level presented by the devolution of justice and the establishment of new local partnerships. It cements progress in recent years in reducing crime and enhancing community confidence, and supports efforts to develop a shared community. The Strategy recognises the importance of local solutions, and provides the flexibility to allow those strategic aims to be delivered, through solutions that are responsive to locally identified needs and emerging issues.

1.8   This Strategy comes at a time of change. The Executive's Programme for Government 2011-2015[3] sets the overarching direction for Government, including a priority to 'build safer communities'. This sits alongside the Justice Minister's reforms to the justice system to build a fair, just and safer community, and the creation of new Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs), which will work with local communities across Northern Ireland to improve community safety.

1.9   *'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities'* will be delivered in a challenging period of resource constraints across the public sector. The focus will be on directing resources where they can make the greatest impact, and focussing on

earlier interventions to prevent and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

1.10   As an Executive Strategy, *'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities'* sets the strategic context for government, justice agencies, and local communities in improving community safety. The early chapters set out the wider context and views expressed during the consultation exercise, followed by the proposals and commitments under the three themes of safer, shared and confident communities, and how these commitments will be delivered regionally and locally.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1   The devolution of justice and the election of a local Justice Minister by the Assembly in 2010 was a major milestone in the governance of Northern Ireland, creating a justice system owned by and accountable to the people of Northern Ireland. Devolution provides an opportunity for greater partnership and collaborative working, across and beyond government, to tackle the underlying issues linked to offending and criminal behaviour which are beyond the reach of the justice system alone, and to build a safer Northern Ireland.

2.2   *'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities'* is an integral part of the Justice Minister's ambition to build a fair, just and safer community, and the Executive's commitments in the Programme for Government. This chapter sets out the wider strategic context for the strategy, and how it fits with and supports wider priorities across government.

Community Safety in Northern Ireland

2.3   The Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002[4] provides for the development of a strategy for enhancing community safety in Northern Ireland so that *"it is, and is perceived to be, safer to live and work, in particular by the reduction of actual and perceived levels of crime and other anti-social behaviour"*.

2.4   "Community safety" has been defined[5] as an approach to preventing, reducing and responding to crime which:

- provides **local solutions** to local problems;
- focuses on **wider social issues**, including anti-social behaviour, fear of crime, quality of life issues, and social and economic factors;
- is delivered through a **partnership** approach, involving the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, as well as community groups and individual citizens; and
- offers holistic and **problem-oriented** solutions.

2.5   The concept of community safety can have a wide scope, and cover a range of issues from public safety, fire safety, safety in the home to road safety. However, in line with the Criminal Justice Review definition and the existing framework for community safety, *'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities'* will continue to focus on those types of crime and anti-social behaviour which affect people's quality of life, with an emphasis on prevention, diversion and early interventions, and a focus on partnership working at all levels.

Executive priorities

2.6   The Executive's Programme for Government (PfG) for 2011-2015, includes priorities of **'protecting our people, the environment and creating safer communities'** and **'building a strong and shared community'**. The Community Safety Strategy contributes directly to these Executive priorities, and reflects the commitments set out in the PfG to:

-*Improve community safety by tackling anti-social behaviour;*

-*Tackle crime against older and vulnerable people by more effective and appropriate sentences and other measures;*

-*Actively seek local agreement to reduce the number of 'peace walls'*

2.7   These commitments are underpinned by a range of supporting milestones and measures (see Annex B), and set the strategic context for the Strategy. With a greater focus on prevention and early intervention, the Community Safety Strategy will align with and support a range of existing and forthcoming Executive-wide policies and strategies around issues such as neighbourhood renewal, children and young people, alcohol and drugs and community relations.

Justice reform

2.8   The Community Safety Strategy is an integral part of the Justice Minister's ambition to build a fair, just and safer community, and sits within the Minister's three strategic priorities of: ***safer, shared communities; faster, fairer justice; and a***

reformed prisons and youth justice system.

2.9 These priorities are underpinned by the Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending (see figure 1, below). The Framework brings together the existing and forthcoming strategies and plans for reform that will have an impact on offending and reducing crime. It reflects the wider social determinants of crime, with links to housing, health, social care, education and employment, and highlights the need to work in partnership and intervene at an earlier stage to reduce offending.

2.10 It is clear from independent reviews of youth justice[6] and the Prison Service[7] that there is strong support for a focus on prevention and early intervention. The Youth Justice Review included a number of recommendations specifically around early intervention and prevention, while the Prison Review Team recommended that there should be a cross-departmental Safer Society Strategy, agreed by the Executive and overseen by the Assembly, to ensure that reducing offending is part of each department's strategy and budgeting.

2.11 The Community Safety Strategy recognises this strong consensus of opinion on the importance of early intervention and prevention, with an emphasis on partnership working at a local level which is responsive to the needs of local communities.
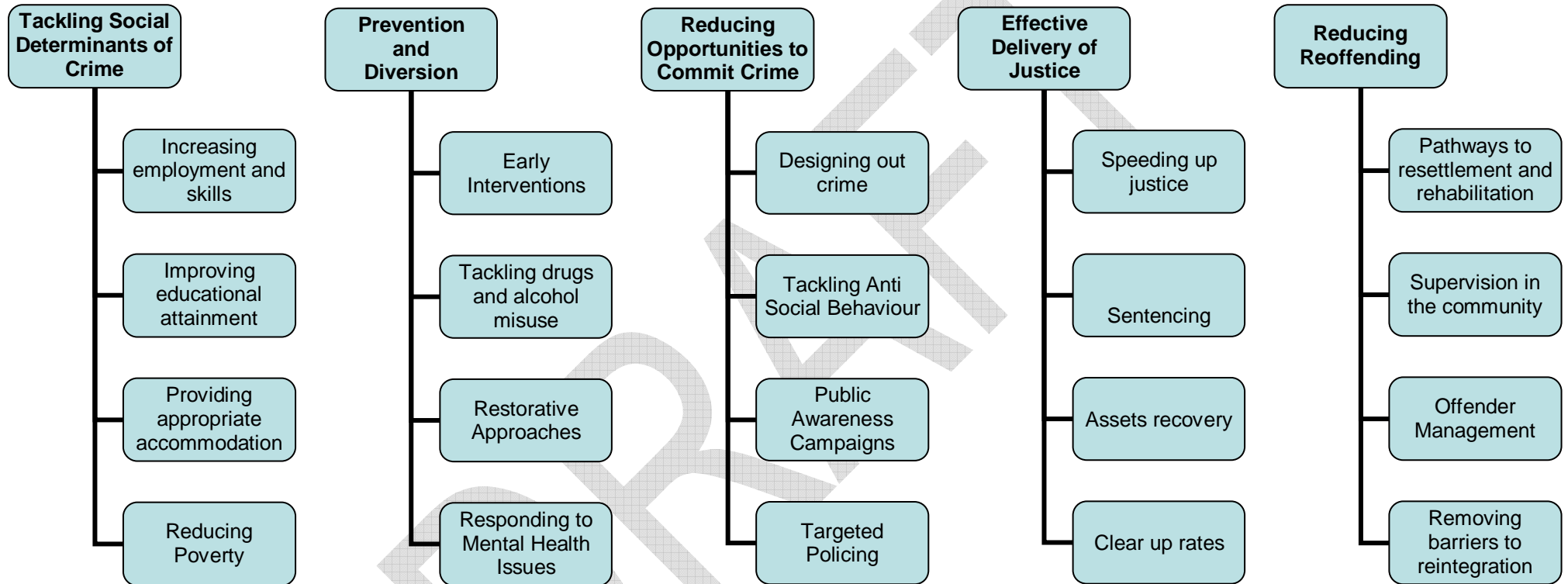
2.12 The Department of Justice intends to publish a new Victims and Witnesses Strategy in 2012/13, to support victims and witnesses of crime through the justice system and build public confidence. The aim of the Victims & Witness Strategy is to improve services for all victims and witnesses of crime in Northern Ireland, from when they come forward to the police until the case they're involved in has been dealt with by the criminal justice system. The Community Safety Strategy complements that work by providing an additional focus on certain types of victims, such as victims of sexual violence or domestic abuse, those who have been subjected to hate crime, victims of human trafficking and older persons. It seeks to encourage greater reporting of crimes against certain types of victims and to ensure their specific needs to be met. These developments, along with wider efforts to

maintain and improve confidence in the justice system are part of the wider context for this Strategy, and support the confident communities theme.

Figure 1: Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending

Tackling Social Determinants of Crime	Prevention and Diversion	Reducing Opportunities to Commit Crime	Effective Delivery of Justice	Reducing Reoffending
Increasing employment and skills	Early Interventions	Designing out crime	Speeding up justice	Pathways to resettlement and rehabilitation
Improving educational attainment	Tackling drugs and alcohol misuse	Tackling Anti Social Behaviour	Sentencing	Supervision in the community
Providing appropriate accommodation	Restorative Approaches	Public Awareness Campaigns	Assets recovery	Offender Management
Reducing Poverty	Responding to Mental Health Issues	Targeted Policing	Clear up rates	Removing barriers to reintegration

Local context

2.13   The Strategy will be delivered within the context of the wider accountability and governance arrangements for policing in Northern Ireland. The Policing Board has oversight of the PSNI, and sets the PSNI's objectives through the Policing Plan, which to date have been complemented by local Policing Plans set by District Policing Partnerships (DPPs). Similarly, Community Safety Partnerships have to date set action plans against locally identified need, in keeping with the strategic objectives set by the Department of Justice.

2.14   As of April 2012, new Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) will bring together the functions of DPPs and CSPs. They will provide arrangements for the monitoring of local police performance through the Policing Committee of each PCSP and lead on the delivery of community safety in the area. PCSPs will consult and engage with local communities, to identify and prioritise local issues of concern and deliver solutions to them which will help make local communities feel safer.

2.15   The new PCSPs will be a partnership of political, independent and designated members, all bringing a range of skills and experience to the table. These will include groups designated to sit on all PCSPs, as well as locally designated groups where individual PCSPs can designate a body which can make a substantial contribution to community safety in the local area. The new partnerships will ensure that the views of local communities can be brought together to address community safety issues in the local area[8].

2.16   The Community Safety Strategy, alongside the Policing Plan, provides the strategic direction for PCSPs, allowing flexibility for PCSPs to deliver locally identified and agreed priorities in line with the strategic objectives. This will be underpinned locally by the PSNI's Policing with the Community Strategy 2020[9],

which sets the context for increasing confidence in the police service through effective engagement, service delivery and partnership working.

2.17   This Strategy will be delivered during a period of local government reform, which will impact on the delivery of community safety at local level. The establishment of the new council model by 2015 and the development of community planning proposals will all shape the future strategic context for community safety.

3.   WHAT YOU TOLD US

3.1   The DOJ undertook a consultation process seeking views on a new Community Safety Strategy in January 2011. The consultation period ran for 12 weeks with a total of 125 written responses received from a range of statutory agencies, local councils, voluntary and community groups, young people, and individual members of the public[10].

3.2   In addition to the written responses, 12 public meetings were held at venues across Northern Ireland with over 300 people in attendance. The Department of Justice also consulted with a range of stakeholders, identified by local Community Safety Partnerships, meeting 48 groups covering a wide range of interests and sectors.

3.3   The responses received to the consultation highlighted a range of common themes and key issues in relation to developing safer, shared and confident communities. Views from public meetings consistently highlighted anti-social behaviour, including the link with alcohol and drugs, as a priority issue. Domestic violence also featured highly at a number of events, and there was strong support for longer term approaches by way of early intervention to prevent offending.

3.4   Some common threads included the need for a joined up approach and greater partnership working, sustained community involvement, engagement and capacity building to promote community safety, and the need to continue to maintain and improve community confidence.

Views on building safer communities

3.5   There was widespread support for a **greater focus on early interventions** as a strategic priority in addressing community safety, through links to existing partnerships, notably the work of the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), at all levels, regionally and locally. The **links between alcohol and drug misuse and disorder** were clearly stated, with support for

continued partnership working through the New Strategic Direction on Alcohol and Drugs.

3.6   Consultees also highlighted the need to **continue efforts to address domestic and sexual violence**, reflecting the crucial role of the voluntary sector in supporting victims and raising awareness, and for a greater recognition of the needs of all victims, including male and same-sex victims.

3.7   Responses highlighted the need for a **joined up approach to address anti-social behaviour** in a holistic manner, to address the underlying causes and to provide more clarity on what anti-social behaviour means. The graduated approach to addressing anti-social behaviour was welcomed by respondents, with suggestions for improvements to delivery. However responses about ASBOs were mixed, with conflicting views about the need for additional legislation around powers of dispersal, parenting support and private landlords. Many consultees challenged the perceptions that young people are responsible for all anti-social behaviour, with intergenerational projects seen as an effective way of breaking down barriers of mistrust and suspicion.

Views on building shared communities

3.8   The resounding message in supporting the aim of building shared communities was that **the local community must lead and be actively engaged in efforts to promote safety at interfaces and areas of contested space**. The need for a joined up approach across all sectors of society was clearly stated, with greater co-ordination needed locally between the work of community safety and good relations organisations. Respondents welcomed the inclusion of hate crime as a priority, and several highlighted the need for a greater focus on education and raising awareness. Reporting of hate crime also featured, with the point made that increased reporting would come with increased confidence amongst the communities affected.

Views on building confident communities

3.9   Respondents highlighted the **need to develop and maintain confidence in the police, justice agencies and all those involved in promoting community safety**. Restorative justice approaches were highlighted as effective in building confidence, as were local 'Watch' schemes. The fear of crime was highlighted as an important issue for older people, with social isolation seen as a major factor, and the need to provide reassurance underlined by many. Young people also raised concerns about crime and victimisation, with intergenerational approaches again highlighted as a positive initiative to build trust.

Views on delivering in partnership

3.10   Consultation responses affirmed the central role of the community and voluntary sectors in creating safer, shared and confident communities. Respondents highlighted the new opportunities presented through the establishment of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSP) with designated seats for statutory organisations, as well as the need to develop the PCSPs to deliver evidence-led outcomes.

3.11   Overall, there was broad endorsement of the priorities and approach set out during the consultation. The following chapters reflect the broad consensus of views expressed, with the high level outcomes and commitments that have been agreed across government. A comprehensive summary of responses to the public consultation is available at www.dojni.gov.uk

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1   The overall aim of the Community Safety Strategy, as endorsed during the consultation, is to help build:

- o *Safer communities, with lower levels of crime and anti-social behaviour;*
- o *Shared communities, where each person's rights are respected in a shared and cohesive community; and*
- o *Confident communities, where people feel safe and have confidence in the agencies that serve them.*

The rest of this chapter lays out our commitments and priorities under these three themes, with chapters 5 – 7 providing further detail on the commitments and how we will deliver them across government.

Outcomes

4.2   To build **safer communities** *with lower levels of crime and anti-social behaviour* we will:

- Intervene earlier to reduce the risk of individuals being drawn into offending;
- Reduce the level of alcohol and drug related crime by supporting individuals who face addiction and substance misuse;
- Tackle domestic and sexual violence;
- Continue to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour in local communities through targeted programmes delivered regionally and locally; and
- Increase safety in our town and city centres, and help make our rural communities safer.

4.3   To build **shared communities** *where each person's rights are respected in a shared and cohesive community* we will:

- Work closely with local communities and across government to address community safety issues at interfaces;

- Seek agreement with local communities to reduce the number of interface structures;
- Tackle all forms of hate crime through prevention, awareness and education and support victims and communities.

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4.4   To build **confident communities** *where people feel safe and have confidence in the agencies that serve them* we will:

- Support PCSPs to enable local communities to identify the issues that matter locally and develop solutions;
- Reduce fear of crime and help people feel safer through regional and local programmes to increase trust and confidence; and
- Give confidence to individuals to report crime to PSNI and others where appropriate, such as Crimestoppers.

Interdependence

Confident

Safer

Shared
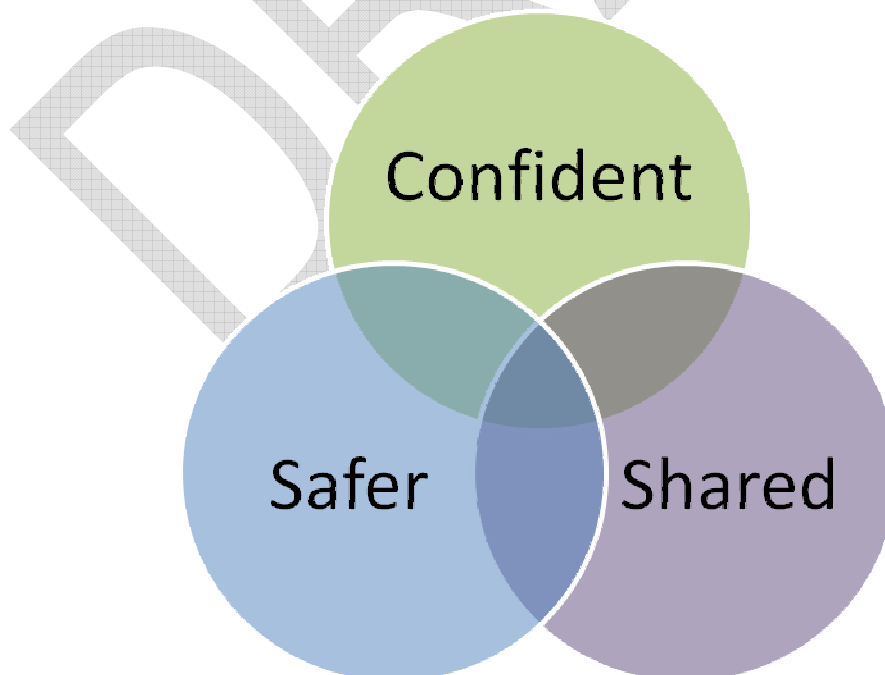
4.5   The three themes are closely interlinked and support each other, and should be considered in this context. Building safer communities by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour requires communities to have confidence in the police and justice agencies that work on their behalf. That confidence can be built where the community sees the statutory agencies engaging with them and addressing the issues that matter locally.

4.6   The shared community theme supports the Executive's wider efforts to build a strong and shared community, recognising the specific community safety needs of communities living in interface areas. For decades safety has been defined by separation and physical barriers, but real and sustainable safety can only come about through sharing, not separation. We will build community confidence and seek local agreement to address interface issues, with safety remaining paramount.

Guiding principles

4.7   Our approach is guided by the following principles, which are the threads that run through the Strategy and will support the delivery of the outcomes:

- **Partnership working**: with other Departments, agencies and the full range of community, voluntary and business organisations to deliver a safer Northern Ireland in a way that reflects the wider objectives of the Executive's Programme for Government;
- **Strategic approach**: ensuring that community safety matters take account of, and inform, wider Executive policies and strategies on relevant issues such as neighbourhood renewal, children and young people, alcohol and drugs, community relations;
- **Evidence based solutions**: focusing on solutions that prevent and reduce crime which are evidence-based, innovative and responsive to local needs;
- **Proportionate approach**: ensuring the right balance of prevention, intervention and enforcement to build community confidence and effectively address community safety issues; and

- **Supporting local delivery**: developing and supporting effective partnerships at all levels, in particular through the proposed Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, and providing strategic direction to ensure effective delivery at a local level.

5. BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES

With lower levels of crime and anti-social behaviour

We will:

- Intervene earlier to reduce the risk of individuals being drawn into offending;

- Reduce the level of alcohol and drug related crime by supporting individuals who face addiction and substance misuse;

- Tackle domestic and sexual violence;

- Continue to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour in local communities through targeted programmes delivered regionally and locally; and

- Increase safety in our town and city centres, and help make our rural communities safer.

5.1   Northern Ireland is one of the safest places to live in Europe, with levels of crime and anti-social behaviour lower than other comparable regions. Crime rates have been on a downward trend in recent years. Recorded crime in 2010/11 was at its lowest level in a decade[11], and anti-social behaviour incidents have fallen by over 20% between 2007/08 and 2010/11[12]. The positive changes to policing and the justice system over the past decade, with the work of DPPs and CSPs bringing the police service and justice agencies closer to and more accountable to local communities, has underpinned much of this progress.

5.2   However there remains much more to be done to continue to build on this success. There were over 100,000 crimes reported in 2010/11 in Northern Ireland, but it is estimated that less than half of all crimes are reported. Despite reductions in recent years, anti-social behaviour continues to be a priority issue of concern for communities across Northern Ireland.

5.3   The costs of crime are high, with the cost of a prison place in Northern Ireland standing at over £70,000 per year[13]. Furthermore, crime and offending has an impact on the local economy and wider society, and is estimated to cost Northern Ireland

over £2.9bn each year[14]. The wider impact of crime can also damage Northern Ireland's reputation, with implications for tourism, inward investment and economic development.

5.4   There is much still to be done to consolidate and build on the positive change seen in recent years to make communities safer. In order to be truly effective both in the short and longer term in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, we must address the complex range of personal, family, environmental and wider socio-economic factors linked to offending over the longer term.

5.5   This chapter describes how we will build safer communities through a balanced approach of building upon what works to prevent and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, and with a greater focus on early intervention to reduce the risk of offending.

Intervening earlier to reduce the risk of individuals being drawn into offending

Context

5.6   The early years of a child's development are crucial. There are many good reasons to promote positive parenting, strong families, and healthy, happy children beyond the fact that doing so might reduce crime and antisocial behaviour in later life, but a considerable amount of evidence links criminal behaviour back to early childhood experiences and issues around parenting and family upbringing. Research has demonstrated clear links between parental substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse or neglect, parental convictions, or family separation with offending and criminal behaviour. There is a compelling argument to support intervening early in childhood to tackle key risk factors that can lead to offending in later life[15].

5.7   Early intervention is not just limited to an individual's early years. Interventions can occur at any time during a person's lifetime, and are usually focussed on key transition periods and 'pathways' at various stages, e.g. moving from primary to secondary level education or experimenting with alcohol or illicit drugs. These 'pathways' are cross-roads, which in certain circumstances, can lead to exposure to risk factors that could lead to offending. Early intervention at these stages has been shown to reduce the risk of offending or re-offending.

5.8   Early intervention can be defined in a number of ways, usually meaning "*intervening early and as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and their families or with a population at risk of developing problems. Early intervention may occur at any point in a child's life*"[16].

5.9   Intervening in the family sphere during the earliest years of a child's development, of course, is a highly delicate and difficult process and it must be handled with utmost care in order to avoid stigmatising either young children or their parents. The justice system has a limited role in delivering early years interventions, and it is rarely appropriate for the justice agencies to engage directly at such an early age. It is therefore important to think of any such interventions as being positive child-focussed support services rather than "crime-prevention" strategies, with the

role of the justice system a supporting one[17].

5.10   In Northern Ireland the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) brings together relevant agencies and Departments, from health and social services, education and justice agencies to lead on integrated planning and commissioning of support and services aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people across Northern Ireland. Early intervention is one of the four strategic themes forming the core work of the CYPSP[18].

5.11   Early intervention spans a range of Executive strategies and policies. '*Our Children and Young People, Our Pledge'*, the Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People[19] is underpinned by a commitment to preventative and early intervention practice. A number of Executive Departments are investing in early years support, for example through Sure Start and the Department of Education's Early Years Strategy[20], in recognition of the benefits of such intensive support in the short and longer term. DHSSPS '*Families Matter'* [21]strategy focuses on early intervention, ensuring that appropriate assistance is available to families at the earliest opportunity, and at all levels of need.

Outcomes

5.12   The scope of *'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities'* is in supporting efforts across government to promote early years intervention, and to focus on **intervening early to reduce the risk of individuals, especially young people, from coming into contact with the justice system.**

5.13   Over the medium to long term (3-5 years) we will:
- deliver evidence-based early interventions by relevant Departments and agencies working in a co-ordinated and collaborative way; and
- divert children and young people from anti-social and offending behaviour.

5.14   To deliver these outcomes, in the short term (0-2 years) we will:

- develop and deliver a network of early intervention programmes across government;

- deliver specific programmes to reduce the risk of offending across 8-18 age range; and

- support delivery of early intervention projects at community level through local partnerships.

Reducing the level of alcohol and drug related crime by supporting individuals who face addiction and substance misuse

Context

5.15   The cost of alcohol misuse to the Northern Ireland economy is estimated to be around £900m each year, with alcohol related crime costing police, prisons and court services around £320 million[22]. Drug misuse, including prescription and over the counter medicines, also impact on society. From the crime in local neighbourhoods to the corrupting effects of organised crime, the harms related to alcohol and drug misuse extend beyond the health risks to the individual – families, friends, communities and society as a whole are all affected.

5.16   Parental substance misuse is shown to increase the harm to children in the home from violence or injury, and there is a clear link between exposure to alcohol and drug misuse at an early age, and the risk of offending behaviour[23].

5.17   The links between alcohol and drug misuse and crime, from low level anti-social behaviour to more serious violent crime, including domestic and sexual violence, is now widely recognised; according to police analysis, alcohol was a contributory factor in over two fifths (44%) of all arrests in 2010[24]. For offenders taken to court, the Probation Board indicate that around 71% of offenders have a background of alcohol or substance misuse.

5.18   Drugs and alcohol are also seen by the public as major causes of crime in Northern Ireland, and "people being drunk or rowdy in public places" is seen as a big problem associated with anti-social behaviour[25].

5.19   The recently published revised New Strategic Direction (NSD) on Alcohol and Drugs 2011-2016[26], led by DHSSPS, aims to reduce the level of alcohol and drug related harm in Northern Ireland, and includes outcomes to improve community safety and address anti-social behaviour. The NSD highlights the importance of local delivery of services, programmes and initiatives to reduce alcohol and drug related harm, with local action plans supported by Drug and Alcohol Co-ordination Teams (DACTs).

Outcomes

5.20 *'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities'* will support and complement the outcomes set in the NSD, with a focus on **tackling alcohol and drug related crime including anti-social behaviour and underage drinking**.

5.21 Over the medium to long term (3-5 years) we will deliver the following outcomes within the wider context of the NSD:

- increase public confidence that alcohol and drug related issues, and their impact at community level, are being addressed;
- support young people and families in dealing with alcohol and drug misuse;
- support offenders with substance misuse problems through a range of targeted services; and
- ensure effective powers are available to address alcohol and drug misuse.

5.22 To deliver these outcomes, in the short term (0-2 years) we will:

- promote schemes locally to reduce alcohol-related offending and anti-social behaviour, including underage drinking;

- support prolific offenders with drug problems with a continuum of treatment from custody to release back into the community;

- increase awareness about alcohol and drug misuse amongst young people;
- work in partnership to develop initiatives to reduce alcohol related crime;
- support effective local delivery through PCSPs and Drug Alcohol Co-ordination Teams (DACTs);
- improve our understanding of the link between alcohol and domestic and sexual violence;
- review powers available to address alcohol and drugs misuse; and
- support existing drug arrest referral schemes.

Tackling domestic and sexual violence

Context

5.23   Domestic and sexual violence occurs regardless of gender, social group, class, religion, race, age, disability or sexuality. On average, PSNI attend a domestic violence incident every 23 minutes[27], with at least 11,000 children in Northern Ireland living in violent homes, and around 700 families being re-housed every year, as a direct consequence of violence in the home[28].

5.24   Sexual offences have increased year on year over the past decade, and the number of reported rape offences increased from 461 offences in 2009/10 to 550 in 2010/11[27]. Such statistics highlight the need for all relevant statutory and voluntary agencies to participate in early identification, referral and intervention processes as appropriate.

5.25   The '*Tackling Violence at Home'* and the '*Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse*'[29] strategies, and accompanying Action Plans, launched in 2005 and 2008 respectively, send out the clear message that domestic and sexual violence are crimes and not acceptable in any circumstances.

5.26   Both strategies run until 2013 and are underpinned by the Executive's unwavering commitment to developing an integrated approach, through which all agencies and organisations can work together to ensure that victims and survivors receive the best possible service and that perpetrators are held to account for their actions.

5.27   Key strands in both strategies are prevention, protection & justice and support. These have been translated into a series of actions aimed at addressing the issues. Progress has already been made in these three key areas. For example:

- media campaigns aimed at raising awareness and encouraging victims to seek help and support;
- changes in legislation to better protect victims;

- the introduction of 24 hour freephone Helplines for victims of domestic and sexual violence;

- Domestic Violence Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) aimed at protecting those victims at risk of serious harm or homicide;

- the ongoing development of a Sexual Assault Referral Centre; and

- practical guidance and support for adult victims of rape and sexual assault.

5.28   It is recognised, however, that more needs to be done and that the service offered to victims should be as seamless as possible.

Outcomes

5.29   Work is on-going with DHSSPS and partner organisations to develop a joint Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy from 2013 onward. This will build on the progress already made and on the good working relationships already established. Whilst the new strategy is still under development, all delivery partners are in agreement that the strategy will focus on the provision of **better prevention, protection & justice, and support services for victims and their children.**

5.30   Over the medium to long term (3-5 years) we will:
- adopt a consistent and long-term approach across Government and all partner agencies to the prevention of domestic and sexual violence and provide an effective response where it occurs.

5.31   To deliver this outcome, in the short term (0-2 years) we will:
- address the actions detailed in the 2012/13 single Domestic and Sexual Violence Action Plan;

- consult with the community on priorities for addressing domestic and sexual violence; and

- develop a single five year domestic and sexual violence strategy and associated Action Plan.

Reducing levels of Anti-Social Behaviour

Context

5.32   Anti-social behaviour (ASB) refers to a variety of behaviour covering a whole range of activity that can blight the quality of life of a particular individual, group or community. It can range from rowdy or inconsiderate behaviour to abandoned vehicles, hoax calls to on street drinking. PSNI categorise ASB under three categories of incidents: personal, nuisance and environmental[30]. These cover the broad range of behaviours that can be labelled as 'anti-social'.

5.33   ASB has become a priority issue of public concern in recent years and much good work has been done to reduce anti-social behaviour in local communities. Between 2007/08 and 2010/11 levels of anti-social behaviour fell by over 20% across Northern Ireland, from 99,186 incidents recorded to the PSNI in 2007/08 to 78,686 in 2010/11[31]. The vast majority of ASB incidents (over 70%) reported to the police were about rowdy or nuisance behaviour.

5.34   Experiences and perceptions of ASB have also changed over recent years, with around 13% of people in Northern Ireland perceiving levels of ASB to be high in their local area, down from 18% in 2003/04[25].

5.35   However, public confidence that the police and other agencies seek people's views on the ASB and crime issues that matter is low[32], highlighting the need to focus on improving engagement with communities on these local issues of concern. This is considered further in chapter 7, below.

5.36   A wide range of statutory agencies have a role to play in addressing ASB, from the justice organisations to the Housing Executive, local councils and others. Our approach to date in addressing ASB has been to work closely with partner organisations at regional and local level to deliver outcomes based on a model of prevention, intervention and enforcement.

5.37   This approach to tackling ASB provides an effective response at all stages. It

includes working at an early stage with individuals, families and communities to prevent ASB from occurring, to intervening early to prevent the problem from escalating, to effective enforcement where required. We will build upon this graduated approach with a greater emphasis on effective early intervention, to address the underlying causes around ASB and promote local successes in tackling ASB.

5.38 Where enforcement is required, existing powers are available to prevent anti-social behaviour, including Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) to protect the public from behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. These powers have been subject to review by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate[33], and are currently under review. Any new powers to address anti-social behaviour will be considered on the basis of what is effective, proportionate and appropriate, with a robust supporting evidence base and lessons learned from elsewhere. As such, proposals highlighted during consultation for powers of dispersal and parenting orders will not be considered within the context of the Community Safety Strategy.

Outcomes

5.39 '*Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities'* will build on the success to date **to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour in local communities through targeted programmes delivered regionally and locally**.

5.40 Over the medium to long term (3-5 years) we will:
- ensure effective partnerships with communities are in place;
- deliver effective prevention and diversion strategies, with a greater emphasis on early intervention to address underlying risk factors;
- ensure agencies have effective, proportionate and appropriate powers to tackle ASB;
- support a sense of pride and ownership within neighbourhoods, to address the disorder (graffiti, litter, vandalism) that acts as a signal for ASB; and
- support victims of anti-social behaviour.

5.41 To deliver this outcome, in the short term (0-2 years) we will:

- agree a common understanding of anti-social behaviour, and the roles and responsibilities in tackling it, for use by the public and statutory agencies;

- refresh Anti-Social Behaviour Forums locally to support effective partnership working;

- develop community capacity to address ASB locally, including through training and accredited programmes;

- deliver tried and tested prevention and diversion programmes locally;

- improve the environment through tackling graffiti and designing out ASB; and

- support intergenerational programmes to build trust and positive perceptions of young people.

Reducing the opportunities for crime

Context

5.42   The importance of minimising the risk factors that can lead to offending have been reflected in the sections above. Reducing the opportunity to commit crime is also an important aspect of building safer communities: this approach focuses on the 'situation' as opposed to the individual, by making it more difficult, more risky and less profitable to commit crime. Reducing opportunities to commit crime must be considered alongside the longer-term approaches to reducing offending.

5.43   Much good work has been done at regional and local level to prevent crime and make it harder for crimes to be committed, through practical measures such as appropriate locks on windows and doors, CCTV and improving the physical environment in communities (e.g. better street lighting, less litter and graffiti).

5.44   We will build upon this good work and **make our neighbourhoods, town and city centres and rural communities safer by reducing the opportunities to commit crime.**

Outcomes

5.45   Over the medium to long term (3-5 years) we will:
- ensure that town and city centres are safe and welcoming spaces for all; and
- support safer rural communities.

5.46   To deliver these outcomes, in the short term (0-2 years) we will:
- work in partnership with the business community to identify priority areas and target projects to reduce business and retail crime;

- promote schemes to improve our town centres including the Purple Flag and Business Improvement Districts (BIDS);

- work in partnership with rural groups to prevent and reduce rural crime; and

- design out crime to ensure homes and businesses are safe.

6. BUILDING SHARED COMMUNITIES,

Where each person's rights are respected in a shared, cohesive community

We will:

- Work closely with local communities and across government to address community safety issues at interfaces;

- Seek agreement with local communities to reduce the number of interface structures;
- Tackle all forms of hate crime through prevention, awareness and education and support victims and communities.

6.1   There are 59 interface structures maintained by the Department of Justice. Cupar Way was the first barrier to be erected. It was a temporary wooden and barbed wire barrier erected by the Army to separate communities in 1969. It is the longest barrier stretching to 650m long.

6.2   Between the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and 2008 four new fences and two security gates were put in place. The last barrier erected was in 2008 at Hazelwood Integrated Primary School. The structures maintained by the Department are:

	Walls/fences	Gates	TOTAL
East Belfast	4	0	4
West Belfast	12	6	18
North Belfast	15	5	20
North West	4	7	11
South West	6	0	6
TOTAL	41	18	59

6.3   It is recognised that there are other physical barriers in Northern Ireland which the Department of Justice does not have responsibility for but which may be relevant to the issue of progress towards a shared future.

6.4   This Strategy seeks to contribute to the creation of a safe, secure and shared future by addressing issues of prejudice and division and by working to support the efforts of many in society to overcome the physical and psychological barriers which exist in some communities.

6.5   In improving safety in interface areas and promoting community safety, this Strategy will help to contribute to progress on issues like economic development, housing, shared space and employment growth.

6.6   It is clear that there are particular challenges in interface areas which in many cases have been disproportionately affected by the legacy of conflict. There has been considerable investment over the years aimed at improving delivery of services and the physical environment in interface areas, where some of the most acute divisions in our society are found. The Strategy seeks to build on that work.

Work closely with local communities and across government to address community safety issues at interfaces

6.7   We recognise that solutions to the most deep rooted problems facing our communities cannot be delivered by any one government department or, indeed, by government alone. We also acknowledge that change will require a process of careful engagement with communities over time.

6.8   Collaboration and partnership will be necessary at a number of levels including:

- Government;
- service delivery partners in the statutory and private sectors;
- community and voluntary groups; and

- importantly, whether through the community and voluntary groups or otherwise, with local communities who need to play a leading role in identifying and defining priorities and needs and contributing to decisions about how those can be most effectively met.

The Community Safety Strategy will contribute directly to that broader governmental work.

6.9   The issue of funding to support change is a significant factor at any time, but especially in the current economic climate. Many of these areas face multiple difficulties resulting from high levels of social deprivation and economic disadvantage. These social factors can often lie behind problems of criminality and anti-social behaviour, or the fear of them, and so the issues cannot be addressed in isolation. The Department will work with others including Belfast City Council and the International Fund for Ireland, as well as looking at use of Government resources, such as the Social Investment Fund, to seek to identify ways in which change can be progressed using the funding that is available to best effect.

Seek agreement with local communities to reduce the number of interface structures

6.10   The priority in the Programme for Government concerning building a strong and shared community includes a commitment to "**actively seek local agreement to reduce the number of 'peace walls'".** The legacy of division and segregation is still obvious. A number of communities continue to see the need for physical barriers such as walls/fences or gates at an interface to ensure separation from 'the other side'. For them the barriers give a sense of security and so are welcome and necessary.

6.11   While recognising the concerns, there is an increasing appetite for change. That desire needs to be nurtured. Government and other agencies need to create

the environment for and facilitate positive change. We are committed to facilitating alternative mechanisms which can enable safety for communities by supporting a transition from the view that safety is achieved through separation.

6.12   The type of approach we are seeking to support is one where crime and fear of crime is "designed out" or reduced. That might be by the approach of community based police officers, or the provision of better lighting or redesigning physical structures etc. The aim is to create spaces that are for the community as a whole and which the community feel safe using or passing through.

6.13   Space is shared when people experience a sense of common ownership and individual belonging. In other words they feel at home there. This space becomes theirs in a collective, proprietary way and produces a sense of pride in what the space expresses and a responsibility for ensuring that it reflects the ideals that are the source of that pride. The approaches in interface areas leading to changes to physical infrastructures and creation of shared spaces need to provide assurance about the safety of all those who live in the shadow of the barriers we would like to remove.

6.14   In some areas development and use of shared space is inhibited by displays of flags and emblems used as an expression of identity in local areas. In other areas, geographic barriers such as rivers or major roads can reinforce a sense of separation. Research shows that various barriers exist in many rural communities; these may not be physical or visible barriers, but they are barriers nonetheless. As 'contested spaces' they are constraining and shape the behaviour and attitudes of both individuals and communities[34].

6.15   The Community Safety Strategy builds upon the views we heard from consultation and builds upon a great deal of good work at community level. Our approach in developing a long term strategy is based on the following principles:

- The perceptions of safety and security of the people living near to interfaces and interface barriers must be addressed;

- We will aspire to the removal of all interface barriers over time;

- The process of removing interface barriers will be undertaken on the basis of sustainable regeneration as part of a process towards building shared cities and towns;

- The Minister of Justice has made it clear that no new security barriers or structures that serve to segregate communities will be built; rather priority must be given to other forms of investment in people and places that will provide appropriate levels of safety and security;

- Change is most likely to progress where it comes from within communities, but communities should be facilitated to see the benefit of such change.

- Government and its agencies should seek to facilitate change and, where possible, encourage it; and

- Greatest value should be obtained from the limited resources, and effort should be made to identify sources of funding.

6.16   Taking these principles we have looked at two main stages in developing a framework for change. This framework seeks to build on existing structures:

- First, at a governmental level, to ensure that there is an appropriate level of support and engagement within relevant government departments, within key statutory agencies, and in the police and other agencies responsible for safety and security; and

- Second, developing local approaches based on the need for inclusivity, involving community representatives and local residents, and recognising the need to take account of the local context. In other words one size does not fit all. The approach to individual interfaces needs to be flexible.

6.17   The Department of Justice's experience from its work in interface areas to date is that collaborative working between government departments and statutory bodies undoubtedly assists in dealing with the issues more effectively. The Minister of Justice has agreed to create a standing Inter-agency Group, as signalled in the Programme for Government, so that we may respond to any request for the

transformation of an interface structure coming from engagement with the community. The Group would also generate schemes for particular locations and then suggest these to communities to show what would be possible.

6.18   This Group, in dealing with issues concerning safety and security at interfaces, will seek to work with communities and to build community confidence. The progress made to date has created some momentum for progress which we want to build on. It will work alongside the existing structures such as the Community Relations Council led Interface Working Group and will aid their work in developing and nurturing requests for community initiated change.

6.19   As mentioned earlier, we are also collaborating with Belfast City Council and, separately, the International Fund for Ireland to address capacity building on the ground.

Outcomes

6.20   Our overall aim through the Community Safety Strategy is to support communities where each person's rights are respected in a shared and cohesive community. In the medium to long term (3-5 years) we will:

- improve cross-departmental engagement;
- inform communication between government and community groups;
- increase capacity for considering change at community level;
- improve community safety;
- reduce community tension; and
- reduce the number of interface structures.

6.21   We will achieve this by delivering the following outcomes in the short term (0-2 years):

- establish an Inter-Agency Group to ensure a collaborative approach by Government and statutory agencies to the transformation of interface areas and review existing arrangements for engagement with communities;

- increase engagement with, and the sharing of information between, agencies and communities;

- build confidence with local communities and residents living adjacent to interface structures; and

- explore alternative approaches to designing out crime identified for specific interface areas.

Tackling all forms of hate crime

6.22   The growing diversity of society in Northern Ireland over recent years has presented many cultural, economic and social benefits to communities. When wrongly perceived, however, growing diversity can also bring challenges to society: changes within communities can lead to increased tensions, which can sometimes manifest themselves in prejudice, hostility and hatred.

6.23   Crimes motivated by prejudice or hostility because of a person's actual or perceived identity are hate crimes. The justice agencies define hate crime as "any incident which constitutes a criminal offence perceived by the victim, or any other person, to be motivated by prejudice or hate towards a person's race, religion, sexual orientation or disability" .

6.24   Hate crimes can have a devastating effect on victims and those who fear becoming victims. The type of behaviour can take many forms, but the most common are assaults, intimidation, harassment and criminal damage. Victims can become repeat victims, compounding the anxiety and fear and causing fear amongst their whole community. It is recognised that low level hate crime can lead to more serious incidents occurring and it is vital that hate crime incidents are reported[35].

6.25   Whilst official statistics show that levels of recorded hate incidents and hate crimes have remained steady over recent years, accounting for around 2% of all recorded crime in Northern Ireland[36], we cannot downplay the serious impact that hate crime can have on victims and wider society.

6.26   A collaborative approach is required across the Executive to effectively tackle hate crime. When finalised, the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration will set the context for partnership working to address the wider social issues that lead to prejudice and hate.

Outcomes

6.27   Our overall aim through the Community Safety Strategy is **to reduce the harm caused by hate crime.**

6.28   Over the medium to long term (3-5 years) we will:

- increase awareness of the impact of hate crime;

- increase community confidence in the ability of the justice agencies to tackle hate crime;

- reduce the number of victims of hate crime; and

- support greater community cohesion.

6.29   Over the short term (0-2 years) we will:

- encourage greater reporting of hate crime, and consider how third party reporting systems can support reporting;

- increase effective support for victims of hate crime;

- promote and support the Unite Against Hate campaign with key partners;

- ensure effective and appropriate enforcement powers are available; and

- deliver targeted interventions to challenge hate crime and address offending behaviour and patterns.

7. BUILDING CONFIDENT COMMUNITIES

Where people feel safe and have confidence in the agencies that serve them

We will:

- Support PCSPs to work with communities to identify the issues that matter locally and develop solutions;
- Reduce fear of crime and help older and vulnerable people feel safer; and
- Give confidence to individuals to report crime to PSNI and others where appropriate such as Crimestoppers.

7.1   Public confidence in the justice system and its agencies is essential to building safer communities. Reforms to policing and the justice system over the past decade have brought about greater accountability, transparency and improved community confidence in the justice agencies. Local partnerships including District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) and Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) have played a central role in bringing the justice agencies closer, and more accountable, to the communities they serve.

7.2   Whilst overall confidence in the police and policing accountability arrangements has increased in recent years[32], underpinned by reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour, falling crime rates do not match with public perceptions. A majority of people believe that crime is increasing across Northern Ireland, and fear of crime is an issue of concern, particularly to older and vulnerable people[25].

7.3   The Community Safety Strategy, and the establishment of new Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs), provides a renewed opportunity to work with local communities to build public confidence in the police and agencies that work on their behalf, to foster greater community participation and engagement with those agencies, to empower communities and help people feel safe.

7.4   This chapter sets out how we will support confident communities, where people feel safer, and have confidence in the agencies which serve them.

DRAFT

Supporting communities through PCSPs to identify the issues that matter locally and develop solutions

Context

7.5   Whilst overall confidence in policing is high, public confidence that the police and other agencies are seeking community views about ASB and crime issues that matter, and are addressing those local concerns, has fallen in recent years[32].

7.6   Engagement with local communities is key to building confidence and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. The establishment of PCSPs in 2012 provides an opportunity for greater partnership working to provide local solutions to issues of local concern. PCSPs will play a pivotal role in building confidence in the justice system, ensuring that members of the community can get involved in helping to develop solutions to tackle crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour in their local area.

7.7   The strategic direction for the partnerships will be set by the Department of Justice and the Northern Ireland Policing Board working together. Funding for the partnerships will be provided by these two organisations on a joint basis.

7.8   The partnerships will consist of three types of member – political members nominated by the council; independent members appointed by the Policing Board; and designated members, drawn from statutory, voluntary and community organisations. Functions relating to policing will be carried out by the Policing Committee, which will consist of the political and independent members.

7.9   To make communities safer, PCSPs will:
   ▪ **consult and engage** with the local community on the issues of concern in relation to policing and community safety. The Policing Committee has a distinct responsibility to provide views to the relevant district commander and the Policing Board on policing matters;
   ▪ **identify and prioritise** the particular issues of concern and prepare plans for how these can be tackled;

- **monitor** – the Policing Committee will monitor the performance of the police and work to gain the co-operation of the public with the police in preventing crime; and

- help to **deliver** a reduction in crime and enhance community safety in their district, directly through their own interventions, through the work of their delivery groups or through support for the work of others.

Outcomes

7.10   We will **support PCSPs to work with communities to identify the issues that matter locally and develop solutions** to build public confidence.

7.11   In the medium to long term (3-5 years) we will:

- increase public confidence that agencies are addressing the crime and ASB issues that matter locally.

7.12   Over the short term (0-2 years) we will:

- establish PCSPs in all council areas across Northern Ireland;

- support PCSPs to work with local communities;

- support and promote local partnerships, including Neighbourhood Watch schemes and Community Safety Wardens;

- support restorative approaches to build community confidence; and

- support communities and provide guidance through Community Safety Toolkits.

Reducing fear of crime and helping people feel safer

Context

7.13   Fear of crime can manifest itself in many ways, and studies shows that fear and worry about crime varies across the population: young women have high levels of worry about violent crime, as do single parents; fear is higher in areas where people perceive levels of ASB to be high; and one in five older people over the age of 75 feel very unsafe walking alone in their local area after dark[25].

7.14   Whilst the fear of crime has a minimal impact on quality of life for two thirds of people in Northern Ireland, others - people with a disability, people living in the social rented sector and recent victims of crime - feel that their lives are greatly affected. These statistics paint a picture of fear of crime as a complex issue, linked to a range of personal, environmental and socio-economic factors, including age, gender, health and income levels. The media plays a role in raising awareness about crime, and may also contribute to fear or worry about crime. Addressing the fear of crime, and ensuring that people feel safe, requires an awareness of these wider factors and a suitable response.

Outcomes

7.15   We will **tackle the fear of crime and help older and vulnerable people feel safer**.

7.16   Over the medium to long term (3-5 years)we will:

- reduce the fear of crime amongst older and vulnerable people.

7.17   In the short term (0-2 years) we will:

- improve our understanding of fear of crime and deliver tailored projects to reduce fear;

- promote intergenerational projects to bring old and young together to increase confidence;

- promote positive perceptions of young people; and

- engage with the media on reporting of crime and anti-social behaviour and its impact on fear and confidence.

Giving confidence to individuals to report crime

Context

7.18   It is estimated that less than half of all crime is reported in Northern Ireland. According to the Northern Ireland Crime Survey[37], the most common reason cited by victims for not reporting a crime to the police was that it was too trivial, there was no loss or the police would not or could not have done anything. In contrast, the least common reason given was a dislike or fear of the police or previous bad experience of the police or courts. Reporting of crime can provide a good barometer of confidence in this sense, as increased confidence in the police and justice agencies may encourage people to come forward where they may not have before.

7.19   Community confidence is linked with wider perceptions of the justice system, and where perceptions are negative, e.g. around sentencing, then individuals will be less likely to come forward. As such, the Community Safety Strategy aligns with wider efforts to increase confidence in, and public awareness of, the wider justice system, for example on support for victims and witnesses and speeding up justice.

7.20   Specific crime types, such as domestic violence and hate crimes, are under-reported for specific reasons. In addition to confidence building measures to generally encourage reporting, we want to focus on these crime types - to build confidence and encourage victims of these types of crime to come forward and report them. We recognise that in order to build confidence, agencies and organisations must communicate effectively with victims and communities to provide

information on specific issues, promote success, provide reassurance and build trust.

7.21   The focus on reporting may see some crime statistics increase in the short term, and impact on other outcomes within the Strategy. However, we will take account of longer term trends and reductions, and measure levels of reporting against levels of recorded crime to give a comprehensive picture of crime levels.

Outcomes

7.22   Our aim is to **give confidence to individuals to report crime** to the PSNI and others where appropriate, e.g. Crimestoppers.

7.23   In the medium to long term (3-5 years) we will:

- Increase community confidence to report crime and anti-social behaviour.

7.22   In the short term (0-2 years) we will:

- encourage reporting of crime through local partnerships, e.g. PCSPs, Neighbourhood Watch, and others;

- support Crimestoppers campaigns regionally and locally;

- promote alternative reporting methods including online and social network channels; and

- promote efforts to encourage the reporting of hate crime and domestic violence.

8. DELIVERING IN PARTNERSHIP

8.1   The high level outcomes and commitments set out in the previous chapters set the strategic direction for improving community safety in Northern Ireland over the next five years. The Strategy highlights the need to work collaboratively within, across and beyond government, and intervene earlier to address the underlying risk factors associated with crime and anti-social behaviour. As chapter 2 highlighted, the Strategy will be delivered within the context of devolution, the wider Executive Programme for Government and local government reform.

8.2   The Strategy recognises that delivering these outcomes is beyond the reach of the justice agencies alone: the outcomes can only be achieved by collaboration and partnership with communities, the voluntary and community sector, the private sector, and across the Executive.

Strategic delivery

8.3   The Strategy will be implemented and monitored at strategic level through the Regional Steering Group on Community Safety, which includes representatives from across Government, the voluntary and community sector and local businesses.

8.4   A Delivery Plan will be developed to deliver the short, medium and long term outcomes set out in the Strategy. This will identify delivery partners and detail outputs and timelines to meet the outcomes and will include indicators and measures of success.

8.5   In order to measure the extent to which the outcomes are delivered, actions will be monitored on an on-going basis and formally reviewed and reported on each year. All Government Departments, agencies and partner organisations with responsibility for an outcome will report on the contribution that they are making towards achievement of the outcomes.

Local delivery

8.6   Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) will be central to the delivery and success of the Strategy at local level. They will lead on identifying priorities and delivering local solutions to community safety issues in their area, and provide arrangements for the monitoring of local police performance through the Policing Committee of each PCSP.

8.7   PCSPs will consult and engage with the local community in relation to policing and community safety, to identify and prioritise the issues of concern and prepare plans for how these can be tackled. They will be responsible for enhancing community safety in their district and, as set out above, for formulating and then delivering against Partnership plans to address the most pressing local problems.

Voluntary and community sector

8.8   The Voluntary and Community sector in Northern Ireland makes a valuable contribution to building safer communities and promoting community safety, from supporting victims and working with offenders, to building community capital and civic participation. At strategic level, we will work with the Voluntary and Community sector to support the delivery of the Strategy's outcomes.

8.9   The sector has built strong links with local partnerships in the delivery of community safety across Northern Ireland, and these links will be further supported with the new PCSP arrangements. Local partnerships can designate organisations which can make a contribution to community safety in the area to sit on the PCSP; this will allow the partnership to harness the expertise of local voluntary and community groups.

Information and communication

8.10   Key to delivering successful outcomes will be developing evidence led solutions, requiring collaboration and sharing knowledge and best practice at all

levels. We will harness the data and information available to improve our picture of community safety and increase our understanding of the issues that affect communities.

8.11   Raising awareness is a cornerstone of improving community confidence and empowering and enabling individuals and communities to be safe and feel safe. We will develop a Community Safety communications strategy to be delivered over the lifetime of the Strategy to support the delivery of the outcomes regionally and locally. The communications strategy will consider how we can ensure we get the right message to the right audience at the right time, including through use of social media channels as well as traditional methods.

Resources

8.12   The Community Safety Strategy will be delivered during a period of reduced public finances. Given these challenges, it will be important to look at innovative approaches to achieving the goals of the strategy by targeting resources at areas of greatest need and where they will have the greatest impact.

8.13   Resource allocation will be directed towards the strategic priorities identified in the Strategy. It will be essential that the resources available to deliver the Strategy are targeted at activities and programmes that have been shown by previous research and evaluation to be effective.

8.14   The Department of Justice, through its Community Safety Unit, will centrally resource the delivery of the Strategy within budgetary allocations. Approximately £3.3m per annum will be allocated to Policing and Community Safety Partnerships with £2.9m per annum allocated to programme and project expenditure.

8.15   We will also consider other funding streams, including recovered assets funds, EU funding, and initiatives such as the Social Investment Fund, where they align with the strategic priorities set out in this document.

9. MEASURING SUCCESS

9.1   The previous chapters set out our priorities and commitments for safer, shared and confident communities. In taking an outcomes focussed approach, we have developed a suite of indicators, to be used to measure progress in achieving the outcomes, highlighted in table 2 below.

9.2   These indicators should be considered in the context of the relevant Programme for Government commitments (Annex B), and progress against these indicators will be reported as the information becomes available. The key indicators are as follows:

SAFER COMMUNITIES	SHARED COMMUNITIES	CONFIDENT COMMUNITIES
- Levels of recorded crime - ASB incidents - ASBOs, ABCs and Warning Letters - Community confidence (NICS) - **Perceptions of ASB* (NICS)** - **Experiences of ASB* (NICS)** - No of children and young	- **No of interface structures*** - No of interface structures subject to incremental change - No of reported hate crimes - Good relations indicators	- **Community confidence in engagement* (NICS)** - **Fear of crime* (NICS)** - Reported crime levels (NICS) - Recorded crime statistics - Number of Crimestoppers reports

people in contact with CJS - Perceptions of the Night –Time Economy (NICS) -Alcohol-related crime (NSD) -Domestic violence incidents		- Local surveys on reporting

*Indicators in bold are linked to the Programme for Government commitments

ANNEX A – EQUALITY

Section 75 (S75) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places the following statutory requirement:

"(1) A public authority shall in carrying out its function relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity–

> *(a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;*
>
> *(b) between men and women generally;*
>
> *(c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and*
>
> *(d) between persons with dependants and persons without.*

(2) Without prejudice to its obligations under subsection (1), a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group".

POLICY AIM AND GROUPS AFFECTED

The proposals in this paper are intended to improve community safety by reducing levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in Northern Ireland. As part of its consultation exercise, the Department conducted an Equality Screening Assessment to gauge whether there the proposals would have a significant differential impact on any of the section 75 categories.

An Equality Screening Assessment was conducted as part of the consultation process to indicate whether there is any likelihood that the proposals will have a

significant differential impact on any of the section 75 categories. The results from this showed that there were certain instances where race, gender and age are issues, and the Community Safety Strategy has been developed with outcomes to acknowledge and address these. The Department also addressed the four standard screening criteria as recommended by the Equality Commission and considered available data and information in arriving at its initial screening decision that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not necessary. This decision recognised that the strategy was designed to provide support in areas where groups are disproportionately likely to be victims of crime and to work positively in areas of greatest disadvantage to secure better overall outcomes.

ANNEX B – RELEVANT PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

Priority 3: PROTECTING OUR PEOPLE, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CREATING SAFER COMMUNITIES		
Improve community safety by tackling anti-social behaviour		
2012/13	**2013/14**	**2014/15**
Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) fully operational. Establish baseline for percentage of people affected by Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).	Monitor quarterly and publish annually NI Crime Survey findings in respect of: % who agree that police and other agencies are dealing with ASB and crime issues that matter in their local area; % who perceive the level of ASB in their area to be high; % whose quality of life is affected by ASB.	Increase the percentage of people who agree that police and other agencies are dealing with ASB and crime issues that matter in their area; A reduction in the percentage of people who perceive the level of ASB in their area to be high; An improvement in the percentage of people whose quality of life is affected by ASB.

Priority 3: PROTECTING OUR PEOPLE, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CREATING SAFER COMMUNITIES		
Tackle crime against older and vulnerable people by more effective and appropriate sentences and other measures (DOJ)		
2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Consult Lord Chief Justice on inclusion of older and vulnerable people in sentencing guidelines initiative	Any necessary legislative changes taken forward as part of DOJ legislative programme Develop programme of measures to reduce fear and increase confidence in older and vulnerable people	Implement programme of measures

Priority 4: BUILDING A STRONG AND SHARED COMMUNITY		
Actively seek local agreement to reduce the number of 'peace walls'		
2012/13	**2013/14**	**2014/15**
Establish inter-agency collaborative approach to addressing interface structures	Implementation of action plans	Implementation of action plans
Review existing arrangements for engagement with communities	Reduction in the number of interface structures	Reduction in the number of interface structures
Identify funding gaps and seek partnership funding opportunities		Ongoing monitoring of community tension and residents' concerns
Develop action plans for individual areas involving stakeholders		Review of progress to identify further opportunities for change and lessons learned

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