



**COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**Room 410, Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX**  
**Tel: 028 9052 1864**

To: Christine Darrah, Clerk to the Committee for Justice

From: Kevin Pelan, Clerk to the Social Development Committee

Date: 24 May 2012

Subject: Committee Response re Community Safety Strategy

### **Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities**

1. The Committee welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Community Safety Strategy. The committee is broadly content with the range of issues addressed in the Strategy including tackling domestic abuse and promoting drug and drink awareness issues.
2. The Committee is of the view that a genuine cross-departmental approach is needed for implementing and funding actions arising from the Strategy. Clarity is therefore required on where the responsibility will lie for funding.
3. The draft Strategy is permeated with references to a “shared-future” but there is no recognition that the vision for a shared future must be underpinned by practical steps to tackle poverty and equality issues, particularly within working class areas. This Committee feels that this needs to be acknowledged as a key element of the Strategy.
4. Divisions caused by class barriers which affect both sides of the community must be challenged and not just the broader issue of closer integration of unionist and nationalist communities.
5. The Committee strongly supports early interventions to help keep young people out of the criminal justice system.
6. The Committee agrees that the new role for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) will be key to building safer and confident communities but the role and remit of these partnerships is not yet clear. This and other concepts need be better developed to foster a better understanding of the Strategy and its implementation.
7. The Committee believe that a multi-agency approach is key to addressing problems and crime in our communities. Detailed consideration should be given to this in the context of the need for a ‘joined-up’ approach to the implementation of the strategy.
8. Linked to the need to tackle poverty in order to address community safety is a need to focus on the regeneration of areas so that elements of the

physical environment, which are factors in fostering community crime, can be addressed at an early design phase.

9. The *fear* of crime can be debilitating for a community. The Committee therefore believes that care must be taken to ensure that the level of anti-social behaviour is not over-stated and that it is therefore necessary to combat this with facts about crime and to communicate these effectively. The Committee believes that is another key aspect in contributing to safer, shared and confident communities.
10. The Committee notes that while the draft refers to “hate crime” there is less focus given to sectarianism. The Committee would like to see specific reference to ‘sectarianism’ to reflect the reality that many communities in our society face.
11. The Committee notes the specific references to ‘interfaces’ and notes that while there may be specific issues to be addressed in these areas it believes that the Strategy should recognise that “peace lines/walls” are *symptoms* of division not the cause.
12. The Committee believes that the community must be central to the development and implementation of the Strategy. It therefore advocates close consultation with the community based on open and transparent communications and clarity on funding and the lines of responsibility.