

A SHARED FUTURE

POLICY AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

(Produced by 'The Community Relations Unit' - Office of the First and Deputy First Minister March 05)

In January 2003 the government talked to many people to find out what they wanted Northern Ireland to be like in the future.

The aim of the consultation was:

- to get people to talk about what the future policy should be aiming to do;
- to get people's views on the proposals and actions that could achieve the future policy.

They gave people two alternatives for the future of Northern Ireland:

1. Accept that the existing pattern of segregation and division is likely to remain for some time. The focus should therefore be on efforts to stabilise and manage the worst consequences of division, both between and within the two main communities.
2. Alternatively, we should try to promote rapid progress towards a more integrated and shared society.

The majority of people who responded, agreed with the vision of a more integrated and shared society. However, many thought that although this is what they would like to see, it may not be possible to achieve this in a short period of time. Others believed that because of the past violence and the unclear political situation this vision of a shared future was not possible. Some people believed that the two visions should not be seen as alternatives to each other but that they could overlap.

The people who responded wanted the government to deliver policies that would help:

- get rid of sectarianism and racism and help people to live and work without fear or intimidation;
- reduce tension and conflict at interface areas;
- support the development of integrated/shared communities where people wish to learn, live, work and play together.

