

towards an anti-poverty strategy

New TSN - the way forward

a consultation document



Office of the

**First Minister and
Deputy First Minister**

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As part of our commitment to tackling poverty and social exclusion, this consultation document was produced by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in conjunction with all other Northern Ireland Government Departments.





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Ministerial foreword

When New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) was launched in 1998, Government was fulfilling one of the commitments given in the Belfast Agreement to work towards making Northern Ireland a more fair, just and prosperous society. New TSN is one of the Government's key socio-economic commitments aimed at combating the problems of unemployment, increasing employability and addressing the causes of social exclusion in Northern Ireland by skewing resources and effort within Government programmes towards those areas, groups and individuals in greatest objective need.

When the former Northern Ireland Executive produced its second Programme for Government, an undertaking was given to carry out a formal evaluation and review of New TSN. As part of this process, the Executive established an advisory panel to oversee the review and appointed independent consultants to undertake the formal evaluation of the policy, after conducting a public consultation on the method to be used. During suspension this work has continued and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone associated with the review for their commitment, professionalism and input to the process.

Significant progress has been made in addressing poverty in Northern Ireland, however there is still much that we need to do. While New TSN has undoubtedly influenced the overall reduction in the employment differentials between the two main communities, recent research has shown that certain groups in our society are more likely to be in poverty. These groups include for example, lone parents and families where one or more family member has a disability. We therefore need to ensure that future development of the policy addresses the needs of those groups and individuals most at risk.

This document summarises the key findings of the evaluation and outlines a number of proposals covering the development and future direction of the policy. I would urge you to read the document thoroughly and send us your views on the proposals.

In the time since the signing of the Belfast Agreement, Northern Ireland society has undergone fundamental change with increasing prosperity linked to continued economic growth. It is important that everyone has the opportunity to benefit, that no one is excluded and that the progress made to date in tackling inequalities is sustained. Policy needs to evolve in a way that retains approaches seen to be effective, while adapting to meet emerging challenges.

The changes proposed here are intended to develop New TSN as a strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland and I welcome your views.



Rt Hon Paul Murphy MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
April 2004

Executive summary

1. New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) is the Government's high level policy for tackling poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland. Originally launched in 1991 as Targeting Social Need and re-launched in 1998 as New Targeting Social Need, this policy aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion by:
 - promoting employment and employability amongst the most disadvantaged;
 - tackling other areas of inequality such as health, education and housing; and
 - establishing formal arrangements for departments working together to tackle social exclusion in vulnerable groups such as people with a disability, minority ethnic groups etc.
2. New TSN is not a separate programme with a dedicated budget, but a general approach to programme development and delivery involving all departments (including some agencies, non-departmental public bodies and North-South implementation bodies) skewing effort and resources towards those in greatest objective need. The previous Executive adopted this policy from the Direct Rule Administration but committed to a review which is now complete.
3. This report invites comments on proposals for changes in New TSN. The proposed changes are based on the following:
 - the results of an independent external evaluation;
 - other independent external assessments submitted during the course of the review; and
 - important socio-economic changes since Targeting Social Need was launched in 1991.

The evaluation

4. The evaluation assessed the effectiveness of processes for the implementation of New TSN, the extent to which actions published within departmental New TSN action plans met their objectives, evidence that New TSN had made a difference 'on the ground' in a number of sample disadvantaged areas and, finally, whether appropriate indicators were being used to monitor progress.
5. The results indicated evidence of good practice and effective co-ordination through working groups that included non-departmental public bodies but highlighted concern over the varied definitions from department to department of 'social need'.
6. The evaluation also identified around one-third of actions in departmental action plans having met their objectives with a further third having been unmet and the final third not having been linked to a specific output, making it difficult to judge success. The evaluators thought that there were too many actions with too few strategic targets.
7. The evaluation identified limitations in the monitoring of New TSN outputs in disadvantaged areas and therefore the difficulties in assessing their collective impacts.
8. The evaluation pointed to the need for indicators to be more sensitive to trends among different population groups such as those defined in Section 75.

Other external assessments

9. Among the different proposals received in the light of these were the following:
 - the need for a wider strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion;
 - the need for oversight by a forum at Ministerial level, drawing on a range of sectors, interests and expertise; and

- greater emphasis on community development and the social economy.

Socio-economic trends

10. Evidence from a variety of surveys suggests changing patterns of social need in Northern Ireland. In particular, it points to:
 - a higher level of consensual poverty in Northern Ireland generally, compared to Great Britain and similar levels to those in the Republic of Ireland;
 - increasingly households in the bottom 30% of income distribution are made up of lone parents, people with disabilities and working households;
 - certain groups, particularly women, children, households looking after children with disabilities and young households are over represented in terms of having low income and lacking basic necessities;
 - socio-economic differentials between the two main communities in Northern Ireland have decreased. However labour market gaps still remain, with unemployment among Catholics higher than for Protestants; and
 - the number of children living in low income households has decreased over the past decade. However, around 150,000 children in Northern Ireland continue to live in households experiencing consensual poverty¹.

¹ Consensual poverty occurs when a household lacks three or more basic necessities. The basic necessities are identified by survey, asking the respondents to identify items commonly perceived to be a basic necessity. An item was established as a necessity if 50% or more of the population considered it to be a necessity.

Proposals for future direction of New TSN

11. New TSN is recognised as having been successfully mainstreamed into the planning and implementation of Government programmes and the budgeting process. The recent evaluation however suggests that it lacks a strategic focus and has too many objectives which are concentrated on process as opposed to outcomes. Also New TSN needs to broaden its scope to deal with a wider range of issues linked to poverty and social exclusion, particularly financial exclusion.

12. New TSN should therefore evolve into a wider anti-poverty strategy. For that reason a number of changes are now proposed which are summarised in the table overleaf.

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Key issues	Proposed change
New TSN be renamed (paragraph 3.13 page 25)	The revised strategy to be named the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy.
The focus of the previous policy was on the means (targeting) of achieving many programme specific objectives (paragraph 3.14 page 25)	The revised strategy will focus more on the outcome of key actions taken to address poverty and social exclusion.
Strategic Objective (paragraph 3.14 page 25)	The overall strategic objective of the Anti-Poverty Strategy is to improve income and living conditions of the most disadvantaged.
Targets	Progress towards the above objective will be measured against specific targets (Annex 2).
The scope of the revised strategy is widened (paragraph 3.15 page 25)	Introduction of a new priority focus on financial exclusion, reinforcing the importance of measures to increase the uptake of financial entitlements and reduce indebtedness and financial hardship.
Clear Strategic Framework (paragraph 3.17 page 25)	<p>The framework should include three high level priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building capacity (to participate in the labour market and take advantage of the market economy) • Increasing employment opportunities and reducing barriers to employment • Dealing with financial hardship (financial exclusion).
Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) (paragraph 3.20 page 27)	A new PSI group will be established to develop a strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion experienced by lone parents.

Key issues	Proposed change
Regional Poverty Action Plan (paragraph 3.22 page 27)	The format of the action plan is to be consistent with National Action Plans as recommended by the European Commission (Annex 4).
Use of Indicators (paragraph 3.23 page 27)	A broad range of statistical indicators should be employed (some of which have been recommended by the Social Protection Committee of the European Commission) to monitor progress in reducing poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland.
Resources (paragraph 3.24 page 28)	The resources required to tackle poverty and social exclusion will continue to be those allocated through the skewing of public expenditure towards those areas, groups and individuals in greatest objective need.
Leadership, Co-ordination and Monitoring (paragraph 3.25 page 28)	The revised strategy will be co-ordinated through a Ministerially led inter-departmental/inter-sectoral anti-poverty forum comprising representatives of key public authorities and other stakeholders including local government, trade unions and the private, voluntary and community sectors.

Introduction

- 1.1 New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) is Government's high level policy for tackling poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland. The purpose of this document is to outline proposals for the possible future development of this policy and to invite comments and views.
- 1.2 The proposals arise out of a formal independent evaluation which was carried out during 2002. A number of other evaluations and assessments of New TSN have been carried out recently, notably those of the Civic Forum, the Queen's University Institute of Governance and voluntary and community sector organisations. This work has provided a very important input to the policy review. The proposals are also set in the context of the socio-economic changes in Northern Ireland in recent years, which provide the focus for policy aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland.

Origins of New TSN

- 1.3 New TSN was a development of a previous policy, 'Targeting Social Need', which was introduced in 1991 as a means of tackling the most acute and serious problems of social disadvantage in Northern Ireland society. This was generally achieved by 'skewing' ie. concentrating effort and public expenditure on areas scoring highest on measures of multiple disadvantage.
- 1.4 Following criticism by the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights of a lack of focus in this policy, Government launched 'New TSN Agenda for Targeting Social Need and Promoting Social Inclusion for Northern Ireland' in 1998. The new policy retained the earlier principles of Targeting Social Need but provided a new focus on employment and employability, other areas of inequality such as health, education and housing, and introduced a new initiative, 'Promoting Social Inclusion', designed to address social exclusion experienced by vulnerable groups through the co-ordinated work of different departments and agencies.
- 1.5 Following devolution, the Northern Ireland Executive adopted New TSN as its approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion and published its

first action plan, “Making it Work”, in March 2001. The former Executive in adopting the policy, however, also committed to evaluating it during 2002 in order to inform future policy direction.

- 1.6 As part of this evaluation process, the Executive invited commentators, practitioners and academics to form an independent panel to provide advice and assessment of both methods proposed for conducting the evaluation and the findings and conclusions. The Executive also conducted extensive consultation between May and July 2002 on the methods to be used before appointing the independent evaluators. The evaluation was completed in early 2003.
- 1.7 To coincide with the evaluation, a number of organisations, including the Northern Ireland Civic Forum, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), the Queen’s University of Belfast Institute of Governance and the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network, made separate submissions to Ministers in which they provided assessments of New TSN and made suggestions for changes to existing policy. These submissions are available at www.newtsni.gov.uk

Stimulus for change

- 2.1 The stimulus for change in New TSN comes from three areas:
- a. the independent evaluation which has exposed strengths and weaknesses;
 - b. from other independent external assessments submitted during the course of the review. These have been based on the extensive knowledge and experience of practitioners working in the field of poverty; and
 - c. there have been many important socio-economic changes since TSN was launched in 1991, and policy must evolve to reflect these changes.

a. The evaluation – key findings

- 2.2 The findings of the independent external evaluation of New TSN are central to proposals for the future direction of policy. They highlight both policy shortcomings and strengths.
- 2.3 The evaluation method was agreed following public consultation on the general approach. It sought to assess:
- the effectiveness of the processes and structures within departments and other public bodies that deliver the policy;
 - the effectiveness of action plans; and
 - impacts on selected disadvantaged areas chosen as case studies.
- 2.4 The evaluation also sought to assess the appropriateness of indicators used for monitoring progress in reducing poverty in Northern Ireland.
- 2.5 This consultation document cannot do justice to the technical detail of the evaluation and the full text of the report can be found at:
www.research.ofmdfmni.gov.uk

Process and structures

2.6 The key findings of the review of the internal processes driving the policy were:

- a wide range of definitions of 'social need' was found within departments, reflecting their different programme objectives;
- there was a general lack of policy objectives and targets in relation to the three core strands of New TSN – employment, employability, and inequalities;
- more detailed policy guidance was required prior to the publication of departmental action plans;
- departments had demonstrated evidence of good practice through the establishment of working groups that included non-departmental public bodies and other stakeholders; and
- lack of control over delivery structures, either through non-departmental public bodies, boards or trusts, limited the departments' ability to deliver on New TSN.

Action plans

2.7 In general, the action plans of departments were too heavily focused on processes rather than outputs. Specifically:

- roughly one-third of all actions (amounting to around 150 actions) in New TSN Action Plans had met their objectives, while a further third had not and the remaining third had not been linked to a specific output, making it difficult to judge success. In general the evaluators felt that there were too many actions and insufficient strategic targets;
- there is a need to better understand what New TSN aims to achieve and for proposed actions to be more clearly linked to specific outcomes; and

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- there should be greater clarity in terms of the desired outcomes of the policy and, related to this, clearer guidance on target setting.

Systems for monitoring

2.8 A key strength of the New TSN policy was the development of information systems and 'base-line' ie. trend information to inform the development of New TSN actions and to improve the identification of impacts arising from them.

- Almost all departments engaged in research and systems development for New TSN;
- departmental action plans paid little attention to the issue of 'community differentials' ie. the differences between the two communities in terms of, for example, levels of unemployment and educational performance;
- there was considerable evidence that financial resources were being targeted within programmes; and
- a number of key departments, with limited potential to 'skew', ie. to concentrate financial resources on addressing objective need, nonetheless demonstrated significant skewing of efforts in relation to accessibility and the uptake of key services. Examples include: Department for Social Development actions in relation to benefit uptake; research by the Social Security Agency into the needs of disadvantaged groups; the targeting by Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment of initial visits by potential investors to disadvantaged areas; and the outreach activities of the Rates Collection Agency in relation to housing benefit claims in areas of disadvantage.

Area analysis

2.9 Three small geographic areas of multiple deprivation were studied to assess how the collective efforts of departments impacted on unemployment, employability and promoting social inclusion, in line with New TSN policy. Departments were also asked to identify how resources or efforts had been targeted on these areas.

The areas in question were West Belfast, Outer West Belfast and Castlederg.

- In general, departmental planning mechanisms were found not to be designed to operate at such a low level of analysis;
- the impact of actions on disadvantaged wards was not generally being monitored;
- a number of departments were able to identify actions in the selected areas that were specifically targeted at areas of disadvantage; and
- current monitoring systems are not effective in identifying small area impacts of New TSN.

2.10 Statutory agencies consulted within these areas raised a number of issues such as the need for additional resources for New TSN. It was felt that departmental action plans lacked visibility on the ground and that New TSN had raised community expectations beyond a realistic level.

2.11 The community and voluntary sector was supportive of the policy but were very critical in relation to changes at local community level. Perceived ineffectiveness was related to the absence of additional New TSN resources, reduced departmental budgets and additional bureaucracy and administration associated with New TSN.

2.12 The sector tended to view New TSN in relation to grant aiding rather than mainstream service provision.

Evaluators' assessment of poverty indicators

2.13 In order to monitor general levels of poverty and prosperity in Northern Ireland, a list of poverty-relevant social and economic statistics had been developed. Some of these were based on recommendations by the European Commission Social Protection Committee to allow comparisons across member states and regions. Others were included in the Department of Work and Pensions publication 'Opportunities for All'. These were chosen to allow comparisons with other parts of the UK (36 in all – see Annex 3).

2.14 In assessing these indicators, the evaluators felt they should focus more on differences between groups and should cover longer timeframes. The indicators should be capable of examining the incidence of key trends by a range of population groups including Section 75 groups, social class and vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

b. External assessment of New TSN

2.15 During the period of the evaluation, a number of external commentators such as NICVA, the Civic Forum, the Institute of Governance at OUB, Democratic Dialogue and the NI Anti-Poverty Network also produced independent reviews of the policy. In addition, views from other organisations such as the Equality Commission, the Rural Development Council and the Equality Coalition have been received.

2.16 Some of the key and common concerns arising from these submissions are outlined below:

- Government should have a wider strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion supported by 'primary targets' based on key indicators such as child poverty, income and employment rather than secondary 'process' indicators;
- the strategy should be overseen by a forum drawing on a range of sectors, interests and expertise;
- the link between the policy and Section 75/equality issues should be highlighted;
- the policy should be financed by 'top slicing' of budgets ie. creating a central budget with contributions from all departments, and greater efficiencies within government;
- there should be more involvement of the social partners and the disadvantaged in the development of the strategy;
- a sub-committee of the NI Executive should oversee implementation of the strategy;

- community development and the social economy should be part of the strategy; and
- there should be greater North–South liaison on poverty issues.

The independent panel

- 2.17 An independent panel consisting of individuals with expertise in the area of social policy was consulted on the findings of the evaluation.
- 2.18 The panel generally endorsed the method and conduct of the evaluation and the basis of the findings of the evaluation. Concerns were expressed in relation to how any new strategy would be funded, the need to ensure that departments continue to skew resources and the need to combine equality and anti-poverty policy in a complementary way.
- 2.19 Some members of the independent panel also felt that the Programme for Government should have a clearer anti-poverty focus and that there was a case for an ‘innovative action fund’ to encourage departments to develop anti-poverty initiatives. A greater focus on education and health was suggested to balance the current focus on labour market outcomes.
- 2.20 Capacity building and social support issues were also emphasised as strategically important actions.

c. Changing patterns of social need

- 2.21 Evidence of changing vulnerability to poverty comes from independent research which compared data from the Northern Ireland Continuous Household Survey (CHS) over roughly a twelve year period (1990–2002)². It is also based on research findings of the Northern Ireland Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey³. Evidence of reductions in socio-economic differentials, particularly between Catholic and Protestant communities also comes from the CHS study. The findings are summarised in Annex 1.

2 Low Income Households in Northern Ireland 1990-2002. Dignan (2003) (see: www.research.ofmdfmi.gov.uk)

3 Bare Necessities: Poverty and Social Exclusion in Northern Ireland. Hillyard, P., Kelly, G., McLaughlin, E., Patsios, D. and Tomlinson, M (2003) (see: www.democraticdialogue.org/reports.htm)

2.22 Together these analyses suggest:

- a higher level of consensual poverty in Northern Ireland generally compared to Great Britain and similar levels compared to the Republic of Ireland (using a standard measure of poverty defined as households lacking a number of specific basic necessities);
- increasingly households in the bottom 30% of income distribution are made up of lone parents (92% of whom are women), people with disabilities and working households;
- certain groups, particularly women, children, households looking after children with disabilities and young households, are over represented in terms of having low income and lacking basic necessities;
- socio-economic differentials between the two main communities in Northern Ireland have decreased, reflected particularly in relation to unemployment levels which have decreased by a much greater extent for Catholics than for Protestants in recent years. However, labour market gaps still remain with unemployment among Catholics still higher than that for Protestants; and
- the number of children living in poor households, ie. in the bottom 30% of income distribution, has decreased over the past decade. However, around 150,000 children in Northern Ireland were found to live in households experiencing consensual poverty. There is a connection between inequalities associated with gender and child poverty. 95% of lone parents in receipt of key benefits are women.

Proposals for the future direction of New TSN

- 3.1 Despite sustained improvement in economic performance and the resultant increase in employment, many in Northern Ireland have not benefited from increased economic growth and prosperity. The risk of being in poverty is still very high for those who are unemployed, however those without work make up a smaller proportion of people in poverty than previously. Groups such as lone parents and people who are sick and disabled make up an increasing proportion of those on low income.
- 3.2 Much progress has been made in addressing inequalities particularly between the two main communities in Northern Ireland but gaps persist, particularly in unemployment rates (see Annex 3). More generally, inequality in areas such as education performance, income and employment status continue to characterise groups defined by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. Women and people with disabilities are, for example, more at risk of being in poverty (see also Annex 3).
- 3.3 Policy must evolve in a way that builds on success, avoids past shortcomings and is relevant to current needs and challenges. The current review process has helped identify strengths, weaknesses and challenges.

Assessment of New TSN

Considering the findings of the independent evaluation and of other external assessments, the following themes are evident:

Strengths

- 3.4 New TSN is recognised in the evaluation as having been 'mainstreamed' successfully into policy planning where it exerts an important influence on policy development, resource allocation and programme implementation. This point has also been highlighted in a recent comparative study of approaches to mainstreaming of

measures to combat poverty, adopted in different European countries⁴.

- 3.5 New TSN is also seen as benefiting from the use of objective statistical measures of multiple disadvantage as a basis for skewing resources and effort at those most in need. The current 'Noble' indicators developed by Dr M Noble⁵, provide a degree of transparency, objectivity and consistency in approaches to identify those most in need. Targeting on the basis of disadvantaged areas will not however 'capture' all those in poverty, many of whom live elsewhere.
- 3.6 Departmental action plans, which are published annually, are recognised as bringing greater transparency and accountability to the process while greater co-ordination has been achieved through groups such as the Inter-departmental Equality and Social Need Steering Group.

Weaknesses

- 3.7 New TSN was seen as not being strategic, particularly as it lacks an overall strategic goal to which the programmes of departments and their public bodies contributed collectively. Correspondingly, it lacks strategic targets - making it difficult to measure progress in tackling poverty in Northern Ireland.
- 3.8 The policy is seen as being overly bureaucratic, with excessive emphasis on the process of monitoring and reporting producing a 'fog' of departmental objectives and actions. The independent evaluators identified 500 actions in a single year making the overall strategic aim difficult to identify.
- 3.9 While departments and their public bodies are reporting regularly, using a common format, this is not consistent with the format recommended within the European Commission's strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion, on which all member states now report.

4 Mainstreaming Social Inclusion – Working for the Prevention and Elimination of Poverty in a Changing Europe, Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin, 2004

5 The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure, 2001. NISRA Occasional Paper No 18 (see: www.nisra.gov.uk)

- 3.10 There is a perception that New TSN effectiveness has been diminished because it does not have its own budget. However, it must be recognised that a significant part (around £2 billion) of the Northern Ireland block (2002) of public expenditure of approximately £6 billion, was assessed as relevant to New TSN objectives. The issue of whether a separate budget would improve effectiveness over and above the skewing of resources remains a matter of debate. It is likely that delivering New TSN-specific objectives through a dedicated budget would greatly reduce the flexibility possible for skewing mainstream public expenditure. It would place limits on the amount of money available to address social need and restrict its use to precisely defined areas of intervention.
- 3.11 Undoubtedly, the key challenge in developing New TSN to tackle poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland more effectively is to set a strategic direction and goal to which the programmes of all the departments and public bodies can contribute collectively. Furthermore, future policy must set targets which will show how progress is being made to that end, and consequently how the lives and life chances of those in greatest need are being improved. One of the biggest challenges for future policy is to achieve a broad consensus and recognition that it reflects an approach which is likely to make a positive difference in the lives of all those who are poor and socially excluded.

Proposals

- 3.12 Many of the principles which are important to the success of existing policy need to be retained. In particular:
- Targeting Social Need at those most objectively disadvantaged;
 - employment and employability as a key focus for future policy;
 - action planning as a means to greater accountability and transparency; and
 - partnership - recognising that many measures do not sit well within a single department and that inter-sectoral working will provide access to knowledge and expertise of those with most direct experience of poverty and social exclusion;

The following specific changes are therefore proposed:

3.13 **New name – The Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy**

3.14 **A clear strategic aim – to improve income and living conditions of the most disadvantaged.** Previous policy focused on the means (targeting) of achieving many detailed programme-specific objectives. The current strategy will therefore focus more on the outcome of key actions taken to address poverty and social exclusion. This outcome is to do with both addressing financial hardship and reducing material poverty where people lack recognised necessities such as warm clothing, waterproof shoes and a healthy diet.

Question 1 – Do you think the proposed strategic aim is the right one?

3.15 **Wider scope for policy – to introduce a new priority focus on financial exclusion,** reinforcing the importance of measures to increase uptake of financial entitlements and reduce indebtedness and financial hardship.

Question 2 – Do you agree there should be a priority focus on financial exclusion and are there any other areas you feel require closer attention?

3.16 **A stronger focus on capacity building** emphasises the relevance of a wide range of programmes, such as health, education and employment and training, to enhancing an individual's capacity to participate in economic and social life which in turn acts as an 'insulator' against poverty.

3.17 **A clear strategic framework is suggested, demonstrating three high level priorities:**

- building capacity to participate in the labour market and take advantage of the market economy;
- increasing employment opportunities and reducing barriers to employment; and

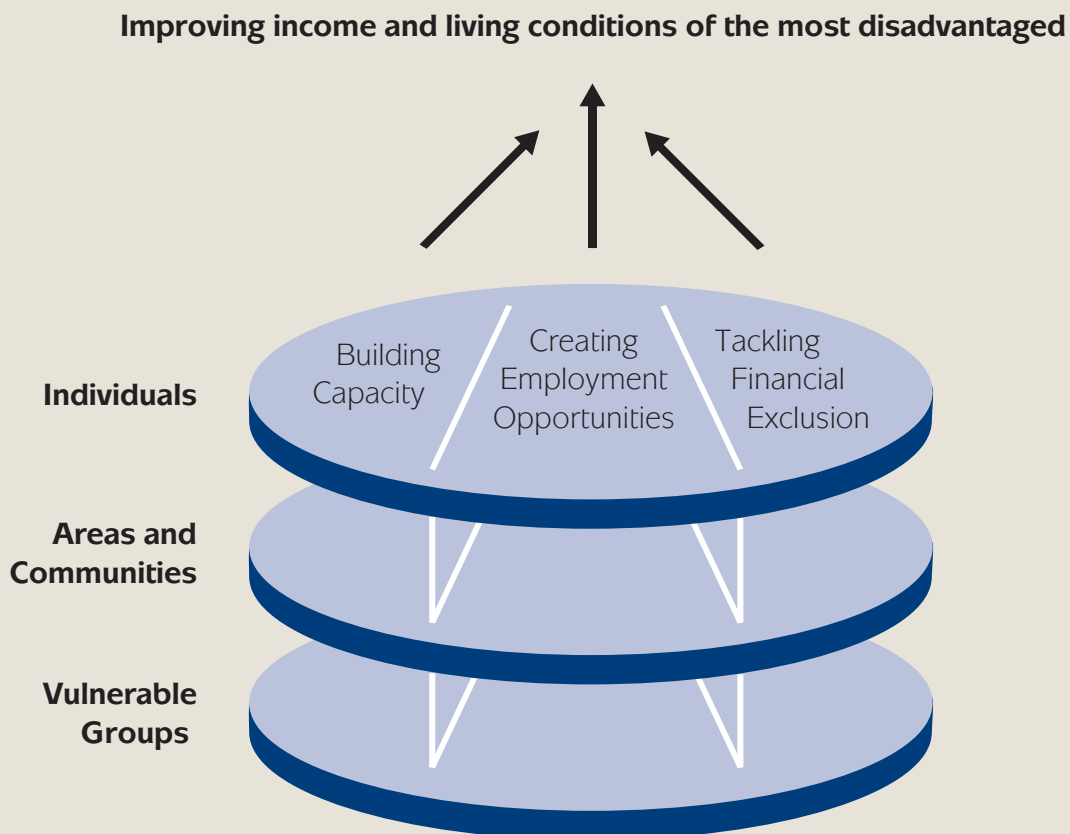
- dealing with financial hardship (financial exclusion).

Question 3 – Do you think that these high level priorities are appropriate for inclusion in the strategic framework – are there other priorities that you feel should be included?

3.18 Measures and actions within these priority areas will have a different focus depending on whether they are aimed at:

- all individuals in objective need;
- the most disadvantaged areas and communities; and
- groups most at risk of being in poverty.

This strategic framework for measures to tackle poverty can be represented diagrammatically as below:



3.19 In taking forward measures to tackle poverty within this strategic framework, service providers will do so in a way that:

- targets objective social need;
- has due regard for statutory equality duties; and
- exploits partnership working.

3.20 **Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) – A new PSI group will be established to develop a strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion experienced by lone parents.** This PSI group will be led by the Office of The First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). Through this group, OFMDFM will be responsible for developing a strategic and joined-up approach, working with relevant sectors and organisations to address the particular problems faced by those having to bring up children without the support of a partner.

3.21 **Targets – to measure progress against the overall strategic aim.** A framework of targets is proposed to achieve improvements in these different priority areas (Annex 2).

3.22 **A Regional Poverty Action Plan – to be produced using a format consistent with National Action Plans as recommended by the European Commission** (Annex 4).

Question 4 – What are your views on the inclusion of a Regional Poverty Action Plan and the proposed format of the plan?

3.23 **Indicators – in addition to statistical indicators used for targeting purposes, a broader range of statistical indicators (currently under review as part of the consultation process) will be employed to monitor more generally progress in reducing poverty and disadvantage in Northern Ireland** (Annex 3). Some of these have been recommended by the Social Protection Committee of the European Commission and also take account of recommendations by the external evaluators.

3.24 **Resources – the resources required to tackle poverty and social exclusion will continue to be those allocated through the skewing of public expenditure (‘bending the spend’) towards those areas, groups and individuals in greatest objective need.** This is the most effective way of ensuring that measures to combat poverty and social exclusion continue to be mainstreamed within public expenditure planning and resource allocation.

Question 5 – Do you think that the ‘skewing’ approach to resources should be continued? If not, what approach do you feel should be adopted?

3.25 **Anti-Poverty Forum – The Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy will be co-ordinated through a Ministerially led inter-departmental and inter-sectoral forum.** The forum will comprise representatives of key public authorities including local government employees, trades unions, the voluntary and community sector and the financial services sector. It will be the job of the forum to oversee the implementation of the strategy across government, including monitoring targets for poverty reduction and progress against these.

Question 6 – What are your views on the proposal for a Ministerially led forum? Do you agree with the composition and remit of the forum?

Building on existing policy and programmes

- 4.1 Some departments' programmes are, by definition, targeting those most in need. Benefit payment, social housing, and neighbourhood and town regeneration programmes in the Department for Social Development (DSD) and 'Welfare to Work' initiatives in the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) are obvious examples. Departments also take account of need when allocating budgets. For example, children in disadvantaged areas are specifically targeted through programmes such as 'Sure Start' and outreach initiatives which promote participation in sport and cultural activities.
- 4.2 The purpose of the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy is not to change this approach but to promote a more joined-up approach focused on those most in need. The aim is to make sure important strategies are co-ordinated across departments. For example, projects such as DSD's 'Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy', which works to improve social, economic and environmental conditions in targeted areas, should complement specific employment, health and education initiatives underway in the same areas. Similarly, departmental programmes should not be limited to identified locations, but should target vulnerable groups, irrespective of where they live.
- 4.3 The Anti-Poverty Strategy would aim to reinforce partnership working at all levels between departments, agencies and non-governmental organisations, as originally recognised under New TSN. The proposed Anti-Poverty Forum and the extension to PSI are tangible strategies to achieve this goal.

Conclusion

- 5.1 Despite the increasing prosperity generated by an improving economy in Northern Ireland, many people continue to experience the hardship caused by poverty and associated disadvantage, and are unable to enjoy a decent standard of living and quality of life.
- 5.2 The concentration of poverty in a relatively small number of areas and neighbourhoods resulted in policies in the early 1990s having a strong focus on areas suffering the greatest disadvantage. With the launch of New TSN, policy developed to focus on promoting employment and employability, tackle social exclusion and address inequalities, particularly between the two communities.
- 5.3 Much progress has been made in tackling these inequalities but more remains to be done. In particular, poverty continues to be concentrated in certain geographical areas and among certain groups, such as people with a disability and lone parent families. Poverty is not exclusive to those who are unemployed - many people in low paid work live at the threshold of poverty. Also, inequalities between the two communities still exist but not to the same extent as previously.
- 5.4 To address persistent and emerging poverty, New TSN needs to evolve into a wider anti-poverty strategy. It should retain its focus on promoting employment and employability and continue to target areas and neighbourhoods suffering multiple disadvantage. It should also build the capacity of individuals, communities and vulnerable groups to take advantage of the market economy, to improve the income and living conditions of the most disadvantaged people in Northern Ireland.
- 5.5 Government is committed to tackling poverty and disadvantage and in particular to eliminating child poverty by the year 2020. In Northern Ireland, this will require actions and initiatives across the full range of public service areas, a shared and clear strategic direction and a means of monitoring progress towards this. This is what the proposed Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy aims to achieve. We would welcome your views on these proposals.

How to respond

- 6.1 While this document contains specific questions on a range of issues, we would particularly welcome views on any of the proposals for change and any other aspect of the supporting work and analysis. Copies of the detailed review report and supporting research can be obtained at **www.research.ofmdfni.gov.uk**
- 6.2 To respond to this consultation paper, please forward your comments to: **Liz McMeekin (tel 028 9052 2236), New TSN Unit, Room E3.19, Block E, Castle Buildings, Belfast, BT4 3SR, or e-mail them to new.tsn@ofmdfni.gov.uk**
- 6.3 This paper is being sent to all key stakeholders, including MPs, MLAs, MEPs, community and voluntary groups and church organisations. If you require additional copies, please contact the above address or telephone (028) 9052 2236/9052 3437. The consultation paper is also available on our website **www.newtsni.gov.uk** and on the Central Consultation Register at **www.consultationni.gov.uk**
- 6.4 If this document is not in a format that meets your requirements, please contact the above address or telephone number.
- 6.5 We intend to discuss the review and its recommendations at a series of seminars and public meetings during the consultation period. Details will be widely advertised in the local press.
- 6.6 **The closing date for comments is Friday 3 September 2004.** All comments will be treated as public unless otherwise indicated in your response. All comments received will be considered when developing this strategy and a summary of responses will be issued to all those who reply to this consultation. The summary will also be placed on our website **www.newtsni.gov.uk**
- 6.7 Thank you for your interest in this consultation paper. We look forward to receiving your comments.



ANNEX 1

Research and statistical evidence

Community differentials

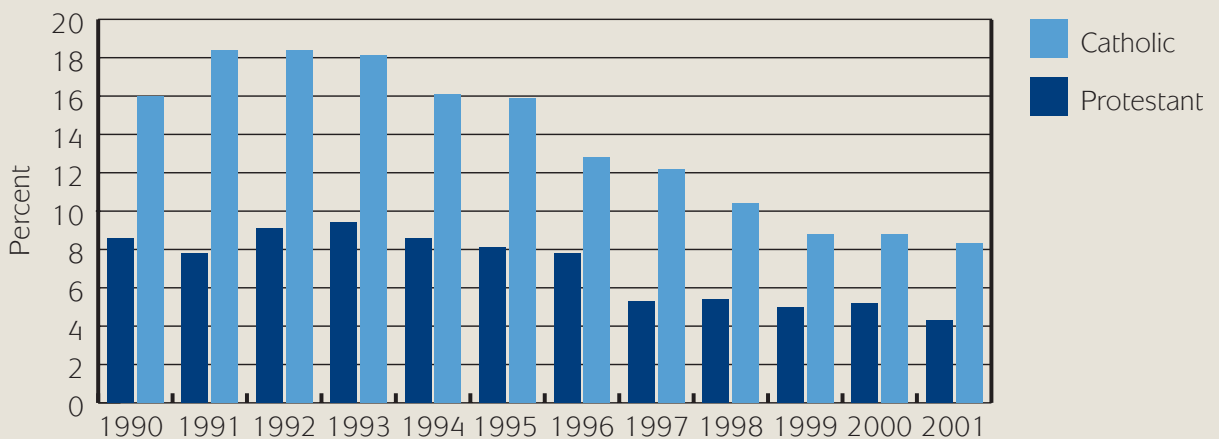
A focus of New TSN has been on differences between the two main communities across a range of policy areas, often referred to as community differentials.

Research funded by OFMDFM and published in 2003 reviewed community differentials across a range of policy areas and can be accessed at www.research.ofmdfmni.gov.uk

One of the objectives of the research was to identify and comment on key differentials across policy areas. The main conclusion drawn in the research was that community differentials in the labour market continue to be the primary source of disparity between the two communities. However, the period of the 1990's saw an improvement in the relative position of Catholics on key labour market indicators.

Unemployment rates

(All economically active 16+)

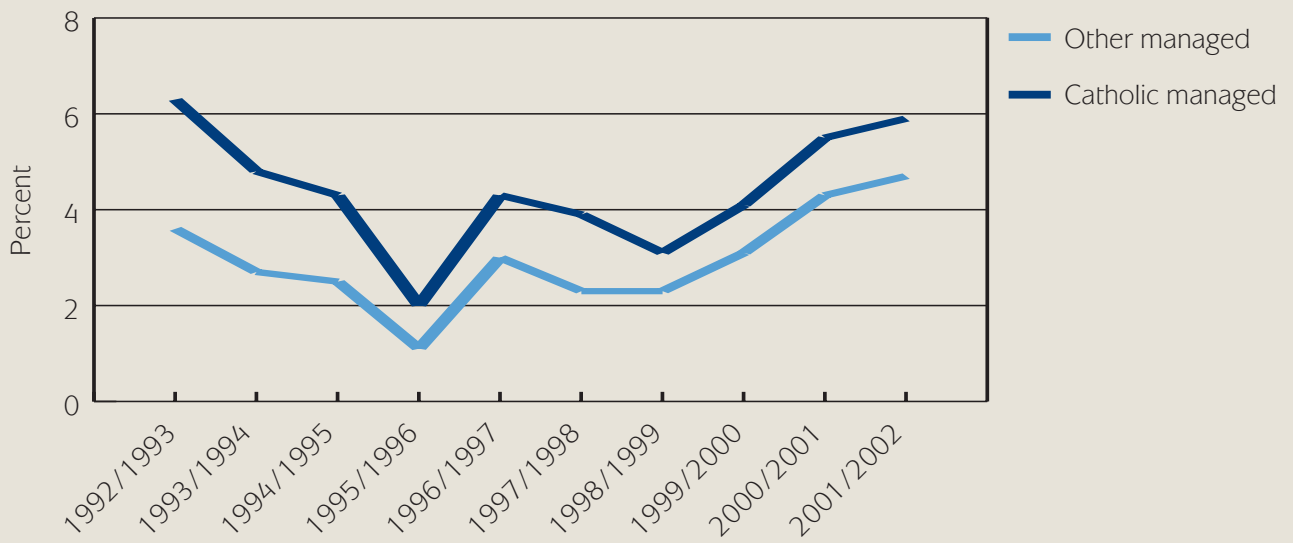


Source: Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey

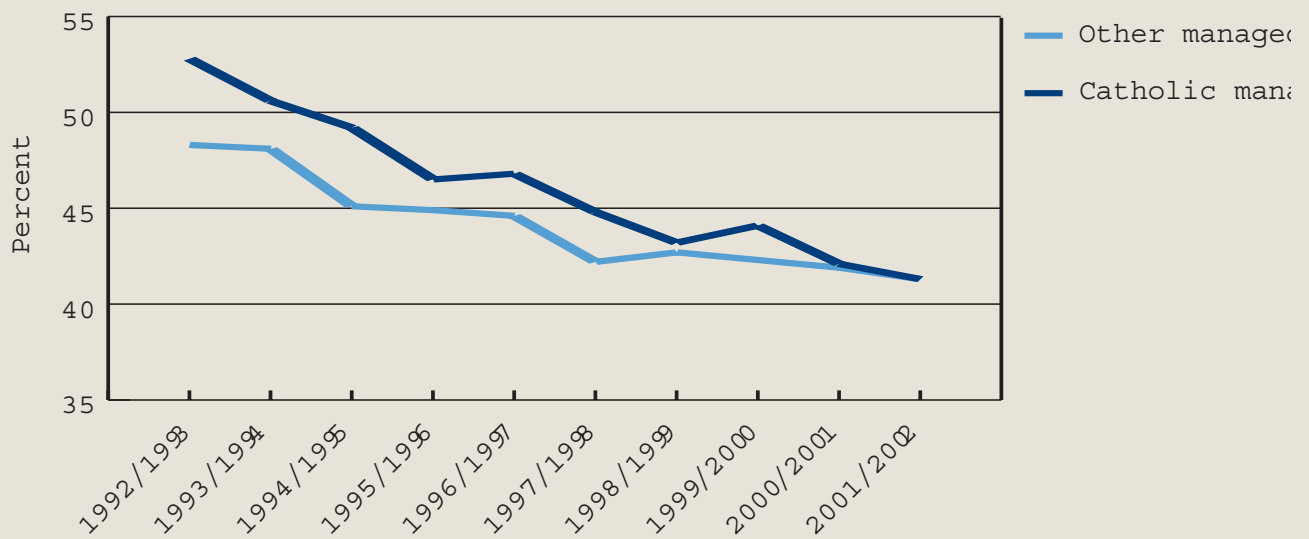
New TSN - the way forward a consultation document

In terms of education, there has been a convergence between the Catholic maintained and other managed sectors in terms of pupils not achieving qualifications, and those not achieving 5 or more GCSEs (A*- C grade).

Pupils achieving no qualifications



Pupils not achieving 5+ GCSEs (A-C)



Source: Department of Education

In relation to health, data from the Continuous Household Survey and the Census indicates that there is little difference between the two main communities in terms of limiting long-standing illness at overall population levels. However on a range of other measures of health such as dangerous levels of alcohol consumption, measures of psychological distress and smoking during pregnancy, differences between the two main communities can be observed.

Poverty definition and measurement

Poverty can be defined and measured in a number of different ways. Poverty can be measured: subjectively; in terms of absolute income; in terms of relative income; and in terms of the lack of basic necessities.

This range of definitions and measures poses specific challenges for researching poverty. A number of recent poverty-related research findings from different poverty measurement perspectives, which have helped inform the development of this paper, are detailed below.

The Northern Ireland Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey

The Northern Ireland Poverty and Social Exclusion survey, funded by Government and conducted by academics at both the Queen's University of Belfast and the University of Ulster was published in October 2003.

The report "Bare Necessities: poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland" can be accessed at:

www.democraticdialogue.org/reports.htm

The definition of poverty adopted in the research comprised the lack of items because they could not be afforded, and which were perceived to constitute a basic necessity. This definition of poverty is commonly referred to as consensual poverty as the necessities of living are identified by a representative sample of the population.

Those households in Northern Ireland defined as poor in 2003 were those lacking three or more basic necessities because they could not be afforded. These households had an average weekly household income of £156.

The research also enabled direct comparisons with poverty definitions and measures adopted by the Republic of Ireland in addition to providing a range of widely used European and international measures of household income.

Consensual poverty was found to be higher in Northern Ireland compared to Great Britain.

Proportion of households who are consensually poor

Northern Ireland (2003)	30%
Great Britain (1999)	24%

Poverty levels were found to be similar to the Republic of Ireland through comparisons with their consistent poverty measure.

Proportion of households in consistent poverty

Northern Ireland (2003)	7%
Republic of Ireland (2000)	6%

The research indicated that there were particular types of individuals and households more likely to experience consensual poverty.

Rates of consensual poverty amongst specific individuals and households

Women [as compared to 25% of men]	29%
Younger households	41%
People who have a long-standing limiting illness or disability	42%
Lone parent households	67%
Housing Executive tenants	67%
Workless households through unemployment	70%
Workless households through sickness/disability	100%

Low income households in Northern Ireland 1990-2002

This research was funded by OFMDFM and was designed to assess the changing nature and characteristics of those living in low income households between 1990 and 2002. In this study, low income households were defined as those in the bottom 30% of the income distribution.

Published in 2003, the report can be accessed at:
www.research.ofmdfmi.gov.uk

Who live in low income households?

One approach to low income is to look at the characteristics of all those living in low income, often referred to as the concentration of low income. The research found that some particular types of households, and the people living in them, comprised more of those living in low income households in 1999/02 compared to the period 1990/94.

Individuals living in households in the bottom 30% of gross household income in 1999/02 compared to 1990/04

Household type	1990/94	1999/02
Lone parent households	19%	25%
Households with a mortgage	20%	24%
Households living in private rented accommodation	6%	10%
Households without dependent children	33%	36%
Households with working adults	29%	35%
Households where the head of household is employed	24%	30%
Households with adults having long-standing illness or disability	48%	61%
Households headed by a female	32%	39%

So, for example, 39% of all people in low income households lived in a household headed by a female in the period 1999/02.

Conversely, other types of households, and the people living in them, were found to comprise less of those living in low income households in 1999/02 compared to 1990/94.

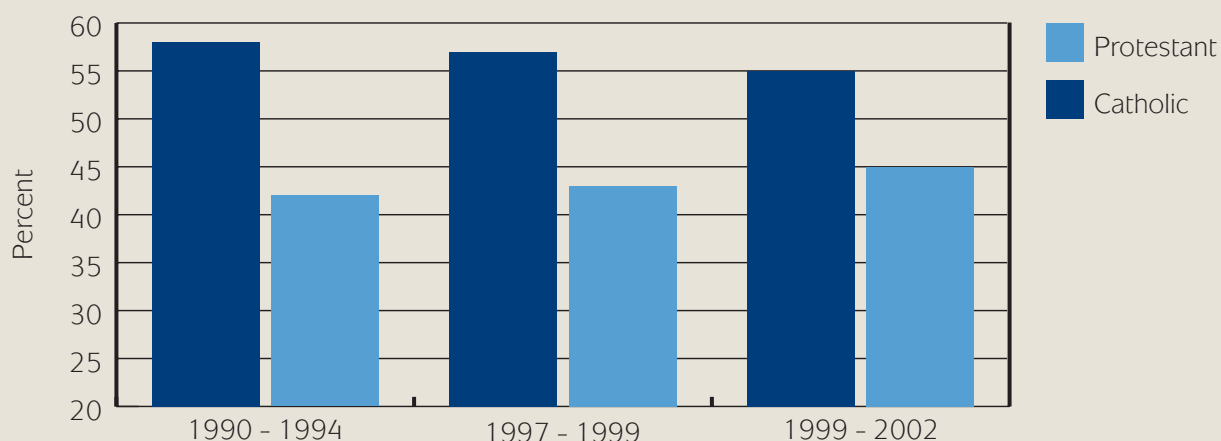
Individuals less likely to live in households in the bottom 30% of gross household income in 1999/02 compared to 1990/94

Household type	1990/94	1999/02
Households comprising a couple with children	43%	33%
Households in public rented (NIHE) accommodation	51%	42%
Households where the head of household is unemployed	23%	9%
Households where the head of household has no qualifications	52%	45%
Households where the head is male	68%	61%

So, for example, 42% of people in 1999/02 living in a low income household lived in public rented accommodation compared to 51% in 1990/94.

In terms of changes to the proportions of those living in low income households who are either Protestant or Catholic, the research has shown a degree of convergence over time.

For every 100 income households



Source: Continuous Household Survey

Figures relate to every 100 low income households and not per 100 Catholic or Protestant households

What is the risk of living in a low income household?

Whilst one perspective of income poverty is to look at the concentration of those who are in income poverty (as above), another approach is to look at the proportion of specific groups living in low income, often expressed in terms of the risk of poverty.

A number of household types and the individuals living in them were shown to have an increased risk of experiencing low income in the period 1999/02 compared to 1990/94.

Individuals more at risk of living in households in the bottom 30% of gross household income in 1990/94 compared to 1999/02

Household type	1990/94	1999/02
Single person or a couple all in full time work	8%	10%
Households in privately rented accommodation	38%	46%
Households in publicly rented accommodation	56%	64%
No workers in the household and where the head of household is sick or disabled	48%	57%
Households with three adults	26%	35%

So, for example, a greater proportion of individuals living in households with three adults lived in income poverty in 1999/02 (35%) than in 1990/94 (26%).

Conversely, there are a number of household types and the individuals living in them who had a decreased risk of experiencing low income in the period 1999/02 compared to 1990/94.

Individuals less at risk of living in households in the bottom 30% of gross household income in 1990/94 compared to 1999/02

Household type	1990/94	1999/02
Single pensioner households	38%	34%
Households comprising a couple with children	27%	23%
Households where the head of household is retired	34%	30%
Households with one adult	57%	52%

So, for example, smaller proportions of single pensioner households in 1999/02 (34%) lived in a low income household compared to 38% in the period 1990/94.

There is also a gender dimension associated with poverty in older people i.e. two-thirds of low income pensioners are women.

These figures are influenced by population change as well as socio-economic factors. A detailed discussion of these issues is contained in the low income study report available on the OFMDFM Research Branch website.

ANNEX 2

Proposed framework of strategic targets for poverty reduction

Consensual poverty targets⁶

Reduce the proportion of Northern Ireland households below the consensual poverty threshold.

Reduce the proportion of children living in households below the consensual poverty threshold.

Reduce the proportion of single parents living in households below the consensual poverty threshold.

Reduce the proportion of people with disabilities living below the consensual poverty threshold.

⁶ The current consensual poverty threshold comprises households lacking three or more basic necessities because they could not be afforded. These households have an average weekly household income of £156. It is generally seen as an important poverty threshold that currently applies to around 180,000 households in Northern Ireland. Measurement of changes to these targets will require the Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey of Northern Ireland to be repeated within five years.

Relative income poverty targets⁷

Reduce the proportion of households living below 60% and 70% of contemporary median equivalised⁸ household income.

Reduce the proportion of children living in households below 60% and 70% of contemporary median equivalised median household income.

Reduce the proportion of single parent households living below 60% and 70% of contemporary equivalised median household income.

Reduce the proportion of people with a disability living in households below 60% and 70% of contemporary equivalised median household income.

The publication of the Family Resources Survey in Spring 2004 provides the baseline year for these relative low income measures.

7 Measures of relative low income are widely used and this is the most widely watched indicator in the European Union. The median is the mid-point of the income distribution and is used rather than the mean or average as it is a better measure of the gap between the poorest and typical families. These targets relate to those households whose income is at or below a certain proportion of the typical household income, in this case 60% and 70%.

8 Income equivalisation is an adjustment process to compensate for the effects of family size on household income. It reflects the fact that a given amount of household income will be stretched further in a larger compared to a smaller family.

Absolute income poverty targets⁹

Decrease the proportion of households living below an income threshold adjusted, year-on-year, for inflation.

Decrease the proportion of children living in households below an income threshold adjusted, year-on-year, for inflation.

Decrease the proportion of single parent households living below an income threshold adjusted, year-on-year, for inflation.

Decrease the proportion of people with a disability living in households below an income threshold adjusted, year-on-year, for inflation.

The first publication of the Family Resources Survey in Spring 2004 provides the data to estimate income thresholds and to set the baseline targets.

Social exclusion

Benchmarks of financial need, such as relative and absolute low income, only provide partial indicators of social need. Access to work, healthcare, education and other services are also important in ensuring social inclusion. A range of social inclusion/exclusion measures will be monitored over time, such as those used in the Northern Ireland Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey.

Given the breadth of indicators and measures available, it is difficult to be definitive. Current practice is to monitor change over a broad range of social statistics, focusing in particular on those groups identified above. These statistics will be monitored over time and may change as a result of consultation.

⁹ It will be important to measure whether the poorest families are seeing their incomes rise in real terms over time, reflecting the effects of inflation. Absolute low income thresholds will be identified for a range of family sizes.

Supporting Targets

(a) Building capacity

Employability (key skills and capabilities) – to increase the proportion of employees earning more than £400 per week and increase the proportion of employees in higher skilled jobs (Standard Occupational Classification) SOC 1-3.

Health – to reduce the gap in the proportion of people with a long standing illness between those in the lowest and highest socio-economic groups by a fifth between 2000 and 2010.

Education – Reduce the difference in educational attainment between those on free schoolmeals and the NI average.

(b) Employment/unemployment

Reduce the proportion of working age people living in workless households.

Improve the labour market position of the most disadvantaged wards.

Reduce differences in economic inactivity rates and employment rates between Catholics and Protestants, men and women, and between people with and without a disability and reduce the absolute difference in Protestant and Catholic unemployment rates.

(c) Tackling financial exclusion

Financial exclusion – to increase the uptake of financial entitlements including benefits, tax credits, reliefs and discounts.

Reduce levels of high interest debt among low income groups.

ANNEX 3

**New TSN evaluation socio-economic indicators,
December 2002**

see: www.research.ofmdfmi.gov.uk for full report

Group Indicator

Children

- 1.1 Incidence of low birth weight babies
- 1.2 The proportion of children living in workless households
- 1.3 The number of children living in families claiming a key benefit
- 1.4 The proportion of school leavers achieving no qualifications
- 1.5 The proportion of children achieving no GCSE's
- 1.6 The proportion of children not achieving 5+ GCSE's (A* - G)
- 1.7 The proportion of children not achieving 5+ GCSE's (A* - C)
- 1.8 The number of births to mothers aged under 16
- 1.9 The proportion of households with at least one child that live in homes that are unfit
- 1.10 The proportion of children that live in homes that are below bedroom standard
- 1.11 The number of children aged under 16 in residential care

Young adults

- 2.1 The proportion of young adults aged between 16 – 24 unemployed
- 2.2 The proportion of young adults aged between 16 – 24 who do not have a basic education (NVO level 2 or equivalent)

Adults

- 3.1 The proportion of working age adults who are in employment
- 3.2 The proportion of working age adults who are unemployed
- 3.3 The proportion of working age adults living in workless households
- 3.4 The proportion of working age adults with disabilities in employment
- 3.5 The proportion of working age lone parents in employment
- 3.6 The proportion of those aged over 50 in employment
- 3.7 The proportion of working age people without a qualification
- 3.8 The proportion of working age people who would like paid work but do not have it
- 3.9 The proportion of workless households where the head of household is long-term unemployed

Older people

- 4.1 The proportion of pensioners with no income other than state retirement pension and state benefits
- 4.2 Pensioners' household weekly spend on necessities
- 4.3 The proportion of households where the head of the household is aged 60 or over that live in homes that are unfit

Macro indicators

- 5.1 The sources of household income by quartile of gross weekly household income
- 5.2 The number of working age people in receipt of a key benefit
- 5.3 The number of individuals claiming JSA or IS for a period of 2 years or more
- 5.4 The proportion of households which are workless
- 5.5 The proportion of households that live in homes that are unfit
- 5.6 The proportion of households that live in homes below the bedroom standard
- 5.7 The proportion of economically active working age people who are long-term unemployed
- 5.8 Life expectancy at birth
- 5.9 Self perceived general health status
- 5.10 The proportion of work rich households
- 5.11 The proportion of lone parent households

ANNEX 4

Proposed format of NI Regional Action Plans

It is proposed that the format of NI Regional Action Plans will be consistent with the Common Outline used for the development of EU National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPs/inclusion).

Background to structure of NAPs

The National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion are a fundamental component of the open method of co-ordination as established in the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council in March 2000. It was felt that while such plans should allow for the diversity of situations and policy priorities at national level, some degree of coherence was necessary as regards their structure and contents in order to facilitate their use in a process of mutual learning.

It was thus proposed that member states should draw up their plans according to an agreed common outline. The outline was based on the political agreement endorsed at Nice in December 2000 and reaffirmed and strengthened at the Copenhagen European Council in December 2002. The plans provide an opportunity for assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the main policy instruments already in place in light of the common objectives. They also allow member states to focus on policies and actions, whether at national, regional or local level, and identify as to how these will be further strengthened so as to meet the objective set in Lisbon of making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion.

While taking into account the overall national situations and existing policy framework, the National Action Plans also allow for the identification of the specific and concrete changes that are proposed to existing policies or programmes, and the new initiatives that are planned in order to address identified problems and weaknesses.

Structure of NI Regional Action Plans

It is proposed that the NI Regional Action Plan will reflect the three strategic priority areas:

- building capacity;
- creating employment opportunities; and
- tackling financial exclusion.

Major trends and challenges

The Plan would give an overview of the economic and social context and changes that need to be taken into account and then identify the major trends, the key immediate and long-term risk factors and the main groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

This section would be supported wherever possible by relevant indicators covering all major aspects of poverty and social exclusion with particular focus being given to monitoring changes over time and monitoring differences between different groups of the population.

Review of progress

This section would assess the extent to which previously set overall targets and objectives have been achieved.

Strategic approach, main objectives and key targets

Using the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy framework, an overall coherent strategy for tackling and preventing poverty and social exclusion would be presented. This would contain long-term objectives for the eradication of poverty and social exclusion.

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Key policy measures

This section will be structured around the three strategy priorities and will outline in detail those key policy measures which it is intended to implement.

In respect of each of the three strategic priorities it would be intended to:

- summarise existing related policy measures;
- detail any new and additional policies or programmes that are to be introduced;
- identify the groups, areas and/or communities and/or specific problems being addressed by particular policy measures;
- outline as appropriate the policy indicators being used to measure progress; and
- indicate how a gender perspective has been taken on board.

Good practice

It is intended that this section will focus on examples of good practice drawn from policy measures or institutional arrangements. Monitoring or evaluation results will be available for those examples selected.

ANNEX 5

Equality issues

Background

1. Section 75 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which came into force on 1st January 2000, states, 'A public authority shall in carrying out its functions 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.'

In addition Section 75 (2) states that; 'Without prejudice to its obligations above, 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.'

2. In line with its legal obligations and the specific commitments in its approved Equality Scheme, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister is fully committed to adhering to the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 when reviewing and developing policy.

The New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) evaluation

3. New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) was launched in 1998. It is Northern Ireland's key anti-poverty policy aimed at tackling social need and social exclusion, by targeting efforts and available resources within existing departmental programmes towards people and areas in greatest social need.

4. The former Executive's Programme for Government (PfG) included a commitment to carry out an evaluation of New TSN by the end of 2003, to assess the way in which the policy was being implemented across departments and to examine its impact with a view to informing future development of the policy.
5. The review of New TSN has highlighted the policy's strengths and perceived weaknesses, and has identified a number of challenges aimed at strengthening the policy to make it more effective at tackling the problems of poverty and social exclusion.

Consideration of available data and research

6. The foundation of good policy development is the evidence base upon which it is built. The consultation document details the key research and statistical developments that have informed both the evaluation of New TSN and the development of proposals for the future development of the policy (sections 1 and 2).
7. Much of this statistics and research work was conducted to address the information gaps that had existed in relation to poverty and social need, the dynamics underpinning poverty and social need in Northern Ireland, and how the characteristics of those in need have changed over the last decade or so. In addition, key socio-economic indicators were developed and income equality analyses conducted to support the evaluation of New TSN.
8. The following research and statistical developments have been critical in terms of developing the current proposals:
 - "Community Differentials and New TSN", *Dignan (2003)* This research assessed community differentials across a range of key policy areas and how these have changed over time, set against the backdrop of economic change within Northern Ireland over the period.
 - 'Low Income Households in Northern Ireland: 1990 – 2002', *Dignan (2003)*. This research examined the changes in the characteristics and composition of those living in the poorest 30% of households, and how this has changed over the period covered.

- "Bare Necessities: Poverty and Social Exclusion in Northern Ireland", *Hillyard, Kelly, McLaughlin, Patsios and Tomlinson (2003)*. This survey was the first to define 'consensual' poverty in Northern Ireland in addition to providing a range of income poverty comparisons.
 - "Evaluation of New TSN: Socio-Economic Indicators for Northern Ireland 1998 – 2001", *McClelland & Love (2002)*. This report compiled a range of statistical indicators of relevance to social need with a focus, where possible and appropriate, on Section 75 categories.
 - "Evaluation of New TSN: Gini Coefficient Analyses", *McClelland and Gribbin (2002)*. This report examined the equality of spread of household income throughout Northern Ireland and, in terms of geographic analyses, the equality of spread of social security benefits at ward level.
 - An additional source of valuable data and research has been the publication of the proceedings of seminars jointly hosted by the School of Sociology and Social Policy at Queen's University Belfast and the Department for Social Development.
9. All the reports can be accessed and downloaded free at **www.research.ofmdfmi.gov.uk** The proceedings of the joint QUB/DSD seminar series can be accessed at **www.dsdni.gov.uk/statistics-research/srb-qub.asp**
10. A remaining gap in data is robust income information on a par to that of the 'Households Below Average Income' series published by the Department for Work and Pensions in Great Britain. This gap will be addressed in Spring 2004 with the publication of the results of the first sweep of the Family Resources Survey (FRS) in Northern Ireland. It is likely that the FRS will become the key source of income poverty information in addition to the consensual poverty approach taken by the Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey.

Assessment of impact

11. While poverty and social exclusion are multi-dimensional issues which cross all Section 75 equality categories, recent research has indicated that certain Section 75 groups are more likely to face poverty and social exclusion.
12. Research has shown that women are more likely to face poverty than men, particularly in households where they are the single parent or have caring responsibilities. Households with one or more disabled members are more likely to be in poverty than those households with no one with a disability.
13. New TSN influences and drives a wide range of government programmes that have a direct influence on people's lives across Northern Ireland. The objective of this evaluation is to increase the positive impact on those who live in poverty and social exclusion, without adding any negative impacts for them or others. Equality and New TSN analyses are closely linked, and wherever screening indicates that it is necessary, New TSN-driven programmes and policies will be subject to full equality impact assessment. It will ensure that our current view of the likely equality impact of the strategy is correct. Experience throughout the Northern Ireland Civil Service indicates that we cannot assess high level strategies, but that equality impact assessments will be conducted on the specific programmes coming out of these where screening indicates that this is necessary. Only equality impact assessment of specific policy measures will accurately identify positive and negative impacts. At a strategic level we will monitor equality impact assessments of New TSN-driven policies.
14. It is sometimes said that action on social need is a "zero sum game" in equality terms, actions to positively impact one Section 75 group will inevitably have a negative impact on others. However this is clearly not the case. Targeting specific groups will disadvantage no one when done in a fair, objective and transparent manner, taking full account of all risks and unintended consequences. It is the goal of this strategy to tackle poverty and improve equality of opportunity for everyone.

Questions on equality issues

15. We are seeking views on the way in which equality issues interface with issues discussed in this document and would be grateful for your comments on the following:

Is there any other data or information we should take into account when thinking about Section 75 (1) equality issues in relation to the strategy?

Could the proposals, in your view, impact on any of the groups within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act in a way we have not identified? If so, how?

Taking account of existing legislation, are there any alternative approaches to tackling poverty and social exclusion in a more equality-friendly way? If so, what are they?

Do you have any other comments on the equality issues raised in this chapter?

Decisions and publication

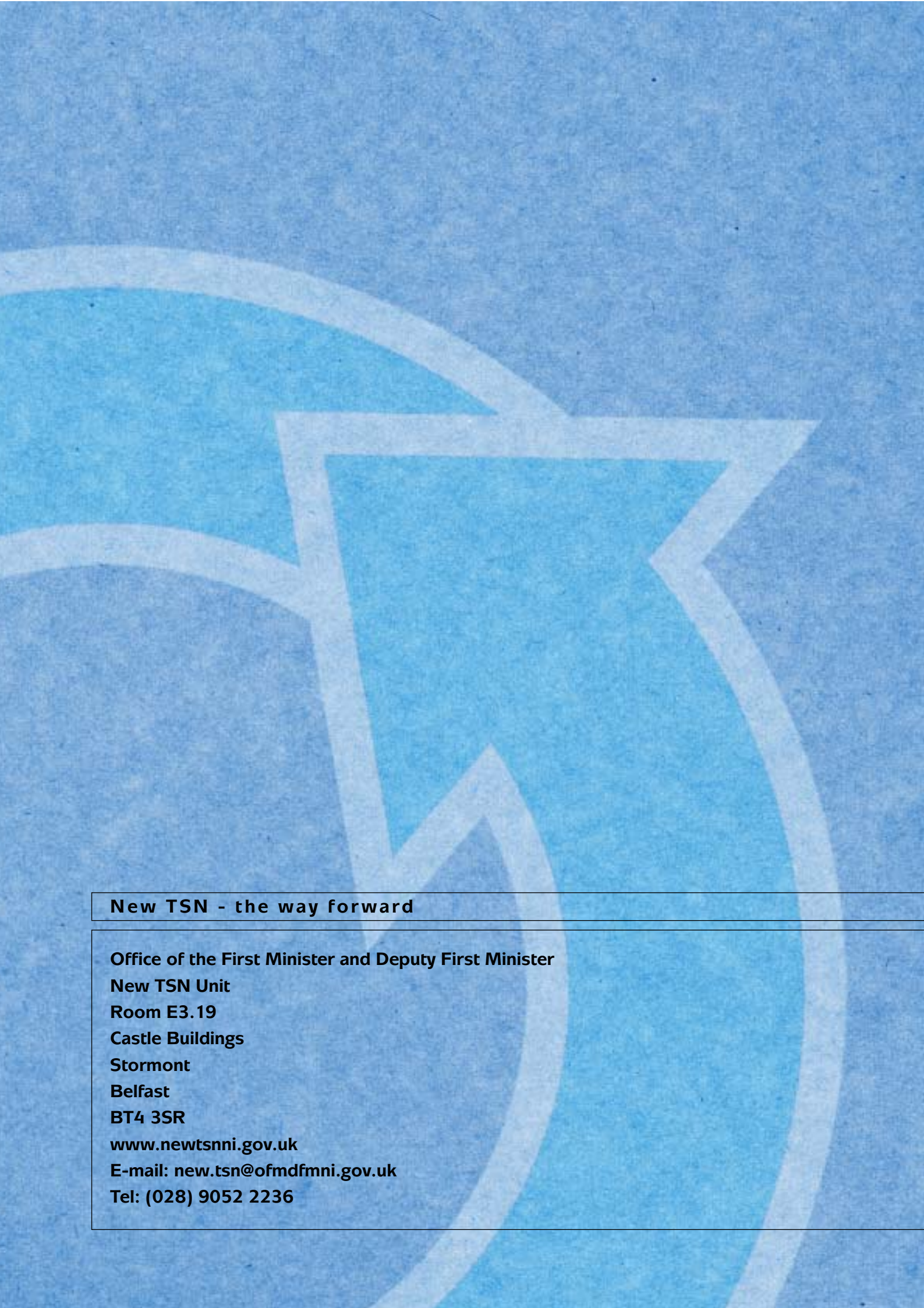
16. Taking account of this public consultation, the consideration of these equality issues and any more raised in consultation will be taken into account prior to final decisions being made by Ministers. This will be fully reflected in the final strategy.

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Notes

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Notes



New TSN - the way forward

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

New TSN Unit

Room E3.19

Castle Buildings

Stormont

Belfast

BT4 3SR

www.newtsni.gov.uk

E-mail: new.tsn@ofmdfmi.gov.uk

Tel: (028) 9052 2236